THE Nation.

?

MAY 3, 2010
TheNation.com

MARK HERTSGAARD
JOHANN HARI
SHEILA KAPLAN & MARILYN B. SNELL
CHRISTIAN PARENTI
ROBERT S. ESHELMAN
KOOHAN PAIK
HEATHER ROGERS
EARTH 2010

$4.95
18
01223
0 377538 7

WALL TO WALL
BEHIND the WALL
MUSIC from the SOVIET ERA 11AM-11PM
FREE
SATURDAY, 15 MAY, 2010
featuring
ST. PETERSBURG CHAMBER PHILHARMONIC (US DEBUT)
SILESIAN QUARTET
SASHA COOKE GILBERT KALISH
EUGENIA ZUKERMAN CONTINUUM
COLORADO QUARTET
LUCY SHELTON and many others
works by PROKOFIEV•SHOSTAKOVICH
SCHULHOFF•BARDANASHVILI
SLONIMSKY•ENESCU•USTVOLSKAYA
ALI-ZADEH•GORECKI•MANSURIAN
TANSMAN•LUTOSLAWSKI and more
symphony space
MUSIC LITERATURE FAMILY THEATRE DANCE FILM
symphonyspace.org
2537 Broadway at 95th Street 212.864.5400
Become a fan on facebook Follow us on twitter

Letters

The Jury Is In

New York City

I was shocked to read Sharon Long's letter in your April 5 issue claiming that "the jury is still out on whether there is an abortion–breast cancer link" and pointing to a 2005 review of some old studies in the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*. The American Cancer Society and the National Institutes of Health, relying on more recent studies, have been at pains to refute this alleged link, yet the rumors continue to circulate on antiabortion websites.

Susan Brownmiller
Author, feminist, activist

Portland, Ore.

I was unfamiliar with the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons* and looked it up. It is not a peer-reviewed journal of research, and the articles I read were not objective appraisals of medical literature. In the early studies examining the risk of breast cancer associated with abortions, there was a major problem, "recall bias"; women who develop breast cancer are more likely to reveal their history of induced abortion than are healthy women. Studies that avoided recall bias (by deriving data from national registries instead of personal interviews) found the risk of breast cancer identical in women with and without induced abortions. More recent studies failed to link breast cancer with either induced or spontaneous abortions. Studies published in 2006, '07 and '08, including the Nurses' Health Study, also reported no association between breast cancer and induced or spontaneous abortions. The jury is *not* still out.

Leon Speroff, MD
Professor emeritus, obstetrics and gynecology
Oregon Health & Science University

Amnesty International in the Cross Hairs

New York City

It is a serious mistake to conflate British Islamists with US solidarity movements of the '70s and '80s, as D.D. Guttenplan and Maria Margaronis do in "Who Speaks for Human Rights?" [April 5]. Today's global jihad has neither the same methods nor the same objectives as national liberation struggles of an earlier period, even if organizations like Cageprisoners appropriate the language of those struggles. This is addressed in a global petition supporting Gita Sahgal's concerns (see human-rights-for-all.org).

Organizations including AWID, the Center for Women's Global Leadership, MADRE, the Urgent Action Fund and Women Living Under Muslim Laws have endorsed this petition, which has signatures from 1,600-plus people, including Rhonda Copelon, Jodie Evans, Dr. Nawal el-Saadawi, Amitav Ghosh, Malalai Joya, Martha Nussbaum, Ros Petchesky and Salman Rushdie.

The issue is whether the human rights of a woman in Afghanistan are as important as those of a man imprisoned in Guantánamo. Nobody is saying Amnesty International was wrong to defend Moazzam Begg's rights—that is a red herring. Defending his rights is different from getting into bed with his organization by arranging European speaking tours, taking him to Downing Street and describing Cageprisoners as human rights defenders. Long experience has taught us that women's rights are the first to be sacrificed by those who want to run with the hares and hunt with the hounds.

Meredith Tax, *president*
Women's WORLD

Guttenplan & Margaronis Reply

London

Comparison is not the same as conflation, or indeed inflation, which is Meredith Tax's method in this letter. We did not say that "global jihad" resembles the solidarity movements of the '70s and '80s; we said that young British Muslims' "sense of moral rectitude" would be familiar to veterans of those movements. Nor did we imply that the human rights of a man in Guantánamo are more important than those of a woman in Afghanistan, or claim that anyone has said Amnesty was wrong to defend Moazzam Begg. We did argue

(continued on page 28)

letters@thenation.com

The Nation.
since 1865

Earth to Congress

If that plucky, animated, singing scrap of paper from *Schoolhouse Rock!*—"(I'm Just a) Bill"—were around today, he'd be begging us to keep him out of the Senate. That's where good ideas go to get their teeth knocked out, to get fattened with pork and disfigured with loopholes, coming out the other end as Frankenstein versions of the initiatives they once were. We're left asking, Is this creature something we can live with and improve over time, as was the case with healthcare reform? Or is the result so hopelessly compromised that it ought never see the light of day?

EDITORIAL

Unfortunately, when it comes to climate change legislation, all signs are pointing to system failure. Congress urgently needs to pass a comprehensive climate bill, but the current Senate proposal, spearheaded by senators Kerry, Lieberman and Graham, threatens to do more harm than good. It is not only inadequate to the task of curbing climate change; it could curtail the power of the EPA and state governments to regulate greenhouse gases—the best avenues for action in the face of Congress's failures.

The cap-and-trade bill that Obama originally proposed was by no means perfect. It did not even try to meet the target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, what the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says is minimally necessary from industrialized nations to avoid a chain-reaction climate catastrophe. But it did include a key mechanism that environmentalists regard as essential for cap and trade to work effectively: it would have auctioned off 100 percent of carbon credits, rather than giving them away, thereby raising funds that could be used to offset the burden of higher energy prices on low- and middle-income families and be invested in renewable energy.

By the time the 1,427-page Waxman-Markey bill squeaked through the House last June, however, those crucial elements of the Obama proposal had been eviscerated. Waxman-Markey would sell only 15 percent of carbon credits at an initial auction, with the rest doled out to polluters, free. Waxman-Markey also includes other concessions to the fossil fuel industry—most alarming, stripping the EPA of much of its regulatory power over greenhouse gases (see Christian Parenti, page 14).

The outlook in the Senate is, if anything, worse. At this writing, its final details have not been released, but from early reports it appears that the Kerry-Lieberman-Graham bill would keep and extend the worst aspects of Waxman-Markey: inadequate emissions-reduction targets (only 3 percent below 1990 levels by 2020), too many free permits and too many allowances for carbon offsets, which are of dubious value in fighting climate change (see Heather Rogers, page 20).

Kerry-Lieberman-Graham would bypass an economywide cap-and-trade system, opting instead for a bundle of separate energy bills that would slowly phase in emissions reductions sector by sector. Some of these pieces of legislation may pass; others may fail; all are ripe for gaming by corporate lobbies. Kerry-Lieberman-Graham would also skew subsidies in the wrong direction, throwing billions at "clean coal" technologies, nuclear power plants and offshore drilling, a questionable gambit favored by the Obama administration to garner support from Republicans and representatives from oil-, gas- and coal-producing states.

Perhaps most troubling, Kerry-Lieberman-Graham would not only gut the EPA of its regulatory power but could

Inside

2 Letters

Editorials & Comment

3 **Earth to Congress**

4 **License to Kill?**
DAVID COLE

5 **Noted**

6 **Capitolism**
Greenspan's Delusions
CHRISTOPHER HAYES

Columns

6 **Deadline Poet**
In Defense of Hamid Karzai
CALVIN TRILLIN

9 **Subject to Debate**
Letter From Berlin
KATHA POLLITT

10 **Sister Citizen**
Black by Choice
MELISSA HARRIS-LACEWELL

Articles

11 **'Climategate' Claptrap**
Don't believe the spin.
MARK HERTSGAARD

Demented deniers, welcome to the USA!
JOHANN HARI

14 **The Case for EPA Action**
The agency already has the tools it needs.
CHRISTIAN PARENTI

17 **Cracking Big Coal**
Greens are chalking up wins on the ground.
ROBERT S. ESHELMAN

20 **Offset Buyers Beware**
Carbon offsets are a dubious enterprise.
HEATHER ROGERS

23 **Sapping the Superfund's Strength**
Sites long set for cleanup are still untouched.
SHEILA KAPLAN AND MARILYN BERLIN SNELL

26 **Living at the 'Tip of the Spear'**
Guam's citizens resist US military plans.
KOOHAN PAIK

Books & the Arts

29 **Extravagant Disorder**
JANA PRIKRYL

32 **Get Out** (POEM)
CRAIG MORGAN TEICHER

33 **A Reign Not of This World**
JONATHAN BLITZER

COVER DESIGN BY GENE CASE & STEPHEN KLING/AVENGING ANGELS; ILLUSTRATIONS BY TIM ROBINSON, CHRISTOPHER SERRA AND ED ABRAMS

VOLUME 290, NUMBER 17, MAY 3, 2010
PRINTED APRIL 14

The Nation.

EDITOR & PUBLISHER: Katrina vanden Heuvel

PRESIDENT: Teresa Stack

MANAGING EDITOR: Roane Carey
LITERARY EDITOR: John Palattella
EXECUTIVE EDITOR: Betsy Reed
SENIOR EDITORS: Richard Lingeman (*on leave*), Richard Kim
WEB EDITOR: Emily Douglas
COPY CHIEF: Judith Long
ASSISTANT LITERARY EDITOR: Miriam Markowitz
COPY EDITOR: Mark Sorkin
ASSISTANT COPY EDITOR: Dave Baker
COPY ASSOCIATE: Lisa Vandepaer
ASSISTANT TO THE EDITOR: Peggy Suttle
INTERNS: Morgan Ashenfelter, Allison Deger, Frederick Deknatel, Chantal Flores, Nicholas Kusnetz, Clarissa A. León, Timothy MacBain, Kate Murphy, Lauren North (*Washington*), Erin Schumaker

WASHINGTON: EDITOR: Christopher Hayes; **CORRESPONDENT:** John Nichols

NATIONAL AFFAIRS CORRESPONDENT: William Greider

COLUMNISTS: Eric Alterman, Alexander Cockburn, Melissa Harris-Lacewell, Naomi Klein, Katha Pollitt, Patricia J. Williams, Gary Younge

DEPARTMENTS: *Architecture*, Jane Holtz Kay; *Art*, Barry Schwabsky; *Corporations,* Robert Sherrill; *Defense*, Michael T. Klare; *Environment*, Mark Hertsgaard; *Films*, Stuart Klawans; *Legal Affairs*, David Cole; *Net Movement*, Ari Melber; *Peace and Disarmament*, Jonathan Schell; *Poetry*, Peter Gizzi; *Sex*, JoAnn Wypijewski; *Sports*, Dave Zirin; *United Nations*, Barbara Crossette; *Deadline Poet*, Calvin Trillin

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS: Kai Bird, Robert L. Borosage, Stephen F. Cohen, Marc Cooper, Arthur C. Danto, Mike Davis, Slavenka Drakulic, Robert Dreyfuss, Susan Faludi, Thomas Ferguson, Doug Henwood, Max Holland, Michael Moore, Christian Parenti, Richard Pollak, Joel Rogers, Karen Rothmyer, Robert Scheer, Herman Schwartz, Bruce Shapiro, Edward Sorel, Gore Vidal, Jon Wiener, Amy Wilentz, Art Winslow

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS: Ari Berman, Lakshmi Chaudhry, William Deresiewicz, Liza Featherstone, Bob Moser, Eyal Press, Scott Sherman

BUREAUS: *London*, Maria Margaronis, D.D. Guttenplan; *Southern Africa*, Mark Gevisser

EDITORIAL BOARD: Deepak Bhargava, Norman Birnbaum, Barbara Ehrenreich, Richard Falk, Frances FitzGerald, Eric Foner, Philip Green, Lani Guinier, Tom Hayden, Tony Kushner, Elinor Langer, Deborah W. Meier, Toni Morrison, Walter Mosley, Victor Navasky, Pedro Antonio Noguera, Richard Parker, Michael Pertschuk, Elizabeth Pochoda, Marcus G. Raskin, Kristina Rizga, Andrea Batista Schlesinger, David Weir, Roger Wilkins

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, SPECIAL PROJECTS/WEBSITE: Peter Rothberg
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER, DEVELOPMENT/ASSOCIATES: Peggy Randall
VICE PRESIDENT, ADVERTISING: Ellen Bollinger
ADVERTISING MANAGER: Amanda Hale
VICE PRESIDENT, CIRCULATION: Arthur Stupar
CIRCULATION MANAGER: Michelle O'Keefe
CIRCULATION FULFILLMENT MANAGER: Katelyn Belyus
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR: Omar Rubio
PRODUCER/WEB COPY EDITOR: Sandy McCroskey
PRODUCTION MANAGER: Timothy Don
NATION ASSOCIATES MANAGER: Joliange Wright
PUBLICITY AND SYNDICATION DIRECTOR: Ben Wyskida
EDUCATION/COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR: Habiba Alcindor
DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL PRODUCTS: Kellye Rogers
WEB PRODUCER: Joshua Leeman
TECHNOLOGY MANAGER: Jason Brown
CONTROLLER: Mary van Valkenburg
ASSISTANT TO VICTOR NAVASKY: Mary Taylor Schilling
DATA ENTRY/MAIL COORDINATOR: John Holtz
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT: Kathleen Thomas
RECEPTIONIST/BUSINESS ASSISTANT: Elizabeth Berniak
ADVERTISING ASSISTANT: Kit Gross
CLERK: Shavonne Frazier
ACADEMIC LIAISON: Charles Bittner

PUBLISHER EMERITUS: Victor Navasky

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: E-mail to letters@thenation.com (300-word limit). Letters are subject to editing for reasons of space and clarity.

SUBMISSIONS: Queries only, no manuscripts. Go to www.thenation.com and click on "about," then "submissions" for a query form. Queries may be mailed to The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. SASE for poems.

INTERNET: Selections from the current issue become available Thursday night at www.thenation.com.

Printed on 100% recycled 40% post-consumer acid- and chlorine-free paper, in the USA.

also pre-empt regulations on greenhouse gases from states and municipalities. This would undo the considerable progress made by states like California—which have pioneered emissions reductions for automobiles, and regional cap-and-trade systems—and thwart the efforts of cities and towns to require developers and businesses to adopt clean energy technologies.

In the face of such maneuvers, some green groups, like Bill McKibben's 350.org, are pushing instead for the CLEAR Act, written by senators Maria Cantwell and Susan Collins. The CLEAR Act's cap-and-dividend system, which works by capping CO_2-producing fossil fuels at the source or point of import, is an elegant idea; but its mandatory emissions targets are weaker than what's needed. It covers only CO_2 (not all greenhouse gases), and one of its prime virtues—that it's just forty pages long!—means that it leaves a lot of vital details out of the picture. Still, it doesn't pre-empt the EPA or state regulations, and its leanness means that it's not laden with pork and industrial giveaways.

Between the two, the CLEAR Act is preferable, on the grounds that it would do less harm and possibly as much or more good. But let's be *very* clear: our legislative process—which allows parochial short-term interests and massive corporate lobbies to undermine the long-term common interests—has proven shockingly inadequate to the monumental task before us: the preservation of the conditions of life for much of the human species. For that we will need action on more than just the Congressional front. The vigorous grassroots movement to halt the construction of new coal-fired plants—which Robert S. Eshelman profiles on page 17—offers a model of what determined, savvy activists can accomplish in the absence of national leadership. But we also need action from the executive branch, from states, cities, businesses and citizens. As it stands, the Kerry-Lieberman-Graham bill would vitiate many of these forums while strengthening the position of the nuclear, natural gas and coal industries. For that reason, we regretfully urge its defeat.

License to Kill?

COMMENT

On April 6 the *New York Times* reported that the Obama administration had approved the targeted killing of an American cleric, Anwar al-Awlaki, who is suspected of encouraging and planning terrorist attacks against the United States. The news that the president had decided to kill an American without charges, without a jury, without a lawyer and without a trial has thus far stirred relatively little outcry. By contrast, President Bush's assertion of the power to detain two Americans without trial—Yaser Hamdi and Jose Padilla—led to two Supreme Court cases and thousands of news articles, op-eds and talk-show debates. On April 13 the *Washington Post* editorial board defended the targeted-killing policy—even though we know precious little about its asserted legal justifications or scope.

In our peculiar post-9/11 world, it is apparently less controversial to kill a suspect in cold blood than to hold him in preventive detention. The *Post* reported on February 14 that

Noted.

A LOSS FOR LAW: It is deeply saddening that **Dawn Johnsen**, President Obama's nominee to head the Justice Department's **Office of Legal Counsel**, has withdrawn from consideration after waiting more than a year without a vote from the Senate. Johnsen, a widely respected moderate, distinguished constitutional scholar and former acting head of the OLC, was more than well qualified. Indeed, no one disputed that. The concern, rather, was that she criticized her Bush administration predecessors for authorizing unchecked executive power and facilitating torture. Her eminently reasonable criticisms were founded on the importance of checks and balances and candid, objective legal advice. That's precisely the kind of person one would think Congress would be delighted to see advising the president.

Johnsen's only other political "sin" was to have worked as a young lawyer for one of the nation's leading prochoice legal organizations, **NARAL**. But no one ever explained why a prochoice president cannot pick a prochoice lawyer to serve in his administration, or why that is even a relevant consideration for a job that focuses almost entirely on the separation of powers.

That the Senate never brought Johnsen's nomination to a vote, even after her nomination advanced out of committee, is unconscionable. That the Obama administration never seems to have gone to bat for her—and even shied away from making her a recess appointment when it recently appointed fifteen others in that way—is mystifying. The result is a real loss for the rule of law, at a time when resurrecting respect for the rule of law should be at the top of the agenda.

DAVID COLE

DEMS NOT DOWN: Which party has won every House seat, whether in traditionally Democratic or Republican districts, in every special election held since **Barack Obama** assumed the presidency? The Democrats. Their party has now carried six special elections—including several for seats that Republican strategists and pundits said were ripe for the picking. The latest victory came on April 13 in Florida, where **Ted Deutch** won the seat vacated by Democrat **Robert Wexler**.

The Florida seat leaned Democratic, but local and national Republicans tried to talk up the notion that senior citizens and swing voters were so horrified by healthcare reform that they would make the switch. Deutch ran as a champion of reform and won 62 percent of the vote, defeating Republican businessman **Ed Lynch**. "We've heard for months that [the vote] is a referendum," Deutch said on election night. "What we learned today is that…the Democratic Party is alive and well."

In truth, Democrats have many tough fights ahead of them this year—including at least three more special elections. Republicans could still achieve more "Massachusetts miracle" wins in traditionally Democratic districts against weak standard-bearers. But it is notable that Deutch's election came the same day a CNN poll found (for the first time since last year) that voters nationally are more inclined, by a 50-46 margin, to back Democrats for House seats.

JOHN NICHOLS

FRIEDMAN FOILED? In February *The Nation* reported on questions being raised about **Stephen Friedman**, former chairman of the board of the **New York Federal Reserve Bank** and a member of the board of directors of **Goldman Sachs**. On December 17, 2008, just over one month after the New York Fed directed **AIG** to pay its counterparties full value for insurance on mortgage-backed securities, Friedman bought 37,300 shares of Goldman stock for about $3 million.

Friedman purchased the stock at a time when Fed policy prohibited him from owning Goldman shares, and before AIG's payment to Goldman was disclosed to the public. Friedman and other Goldman board members had been regularly briefed in late 2007 and early 2008 regarding how much money AIG owed Goldman.

The Nation suggested that further investigation from the **House Oversight Committee** and the **Justice Department** was in order—not only to determine whether Friedman profited from inside information and violated Fed rules but also to shed light on the arcane regulations and conflicts of interest that riddle the Federal Reserve system.

After completing a review of internal Fed documents in early April, committee chair **Edolphus Towns** and member **Stephen Lynch** issued a joint statement saying that "closer examination of this issue is necessary, especially when Congress is considering increasing the Fed's powers." A hearing will take place "to learn more from Mr. Friedman and senior Fed officials about how he was permitted to make windfall profits by trading stock in a company he had a role in regulating." Stay tuned.

GREG KAUFMANN

PESTICIDE PUSHER: While many applauded President Obama's long-awaited recess appointments on March 27, agricultural activists slammed his decision to appoint "pesticide pusher" **Islam Siddiqui** as the chief agricultural negotiator in the office of the US trade representative. Siddiqui is currently vice president for science and regulatory affairs for **CropLife America**, a global agribusiness lobbying group representing **Monsanto**, **DuPont**, **Dow** and other pesticide corporations.

In March 2009 these companies urged first lady **Michelle Obama** to reconsider her decision banning the use of pesticides in her organic White House garden. In August 2005 they petitioned the EPA to use children in pesticide experiments—a move that prompted environmental groups to sue the EPA for failing to protect children. As an official at the **USDA**, Siddiqui oversaw the first proposed federal standards for organics. But when those rules allowed genetically modified organisms, irradiation and toxic sludge, the USDA received 300,000 public comments in protest, and only then tightened the standards.

Last year Siddiqui's appointment stalled when 90,000 people and more than eighty consumer advocacy groups objected to his appointment. This year at least 110 organizations, spearheaded by the **Pesticide Action Network** and the **National Family Farm Coalition**, have once again urged the Senate to reject his appointment, in the interest of "family farmers, farmworkers, consumers and the planet."

CLARISSA A. LEÓN

the Obama administration has killed many more suspected terrorists than it has captured. According to *National Journal*, Obama ordered more drone attacks in his first year than President Bush did in two full presidential terms. The *Post* article suggested that the two developments may not be unrelated. A dead suspect, after all, has no right to habeas corpus; and with a dead suspect, one need not agonize over the choice between civilian criminal court and a military commission.

But surely this has it backward. The argument for preventive detention during armed conflicts has always been that since the army is authorized to kill an enemy combatant, it must be permitted to take the lesser step of detaining him for the duration of the conflict. If so, shouldn't we be at least as concerned about executive killing as we are about executive detention?

Wars involve killing, of course, but the scope of the current armed conflict and the identity of "combatants" have both been hotly disputed. International humanitarian law requires that the state target only combatants, not civilians who are not directly participating in the conflict; that any use of force be proportional; and that collateral damage be limited. And certainly where an enemy combatant can be captured rather than killed, the government should be required to pursue that avenue. These principles ought not to vary whether the state is targeting citizens or foreign nationals. If a person is aiming a weapon at a US military convoy on the battlefield, convoy members need not check his passport or provide him a hearing before shooting to kill.

Awlaki, however, is nowhere near the battlefield. He's said to be hiding out in Yemen. He's not aiming a gun at US forces. On the other hand, he should not be mistaken for an innocent bystander. American counterterrorism officials accuse him of recruiting people for terrorist plots against US targets. And he has been linked to three of the 9/11 hijackers; to Nidal Hasan, the US Army psychiatrist who killed thirteen and wounded thirty in a mass shooting at Fort Hood in November; and to Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the would-be Christmas Day bomber—although in each instance the alleged ties appear to focus more on vague communications than on any concrete criminal activity.

It may be that Awlaki fits the definition of a "belligerent" who can't be apprehended and is therefore a proper target in this armed conflict. But the American public just doesn't know. Are we simply to trust our government to make the right call? That's what the Bush administration argued about the men in Guantánamo—yet more than 500 of them have been released, suggesting that they were not, as claimed, "the worst of the worst." Unlike a detainee, a dead man cannot be released when the government realizes it has made a mistake.

More troubling, the public doesn't even know what the Obama administration's legal theory is for targeted killings. State Department legal adviser Harold Koh provided very general outlines in a speech in March before the American Society of International Law, but his speech was short on specifics. The program is undoubtedly predicated on a detailed memorandum from the Office of Legal Counsel, setting forth the legal arguments that are said to justify the action, the statutory or constitutional authorities relied upon, the criteria for targeting and the procedural safeguards established to minimize mistakes. The ACLU has requested the documents under the Freedom of Information Act, but so far the administration has declined to disclose them. It may well be that the details surrounding a particular target need to be classified in advance, but there is no reason that the government should not be transparent about the legal framework and procedural protections it has adopted. A democracy that permits its president to adopt wholly secret procedures and secret authorities for killing its own members violates the very rule-of-law ideals that President Obama promised to uphold.

DAVID COLE

David Cole (cole@law.georgetown.edu), The Nation's legal affairs correspondent, is the author, most recently, of The Torture Memos: Rationalizing the Unthinkable.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

In Defense of Hamid Karzai

Reliable? He's less than most.
It's hard to find an ally lesser.
Corrupt? Oh, yes, the man's that, too.
But, hey, is he a snazzy dresser!

Greenspan's Delusions

Capitolism

By now, it hardly counts as news when a prominent member of America's ruling class refuses to take responsibility for the havoc and misery his actions have wrought. In post-crisis America, dissembling and baroque exculpatory alternative histories have become a kind of patois among the best and brightest.

But even by this degraded standard, Alan Greenspan's recent performance before the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission (FCIC) stands out. The crisis has not been kind to Greenspan's reputation. Yet despite overseeing a Fed that helped inflate the housing bubble and failed to use its regulatory authority to curtail fraud and predatory practices, Greenspan is still a member of high finance's club. When Goldman Sachs wants a big name to wow the attendees at a conference, it calls in the erstwhile Oracle. The über-Establishment Brookings Institution published a forty-eight-page paper by Greenspan on the origins of the crisis that reads like a brief for the defense.

Greenspan's excuse for his malfeasance has more or less been: nobody could have predicted it. "The Federal Reserve had as good an economic organization as exists," he told the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform in October 2008. "If all those extraordinarily capable people were unable to foresee the development of this critical problem…we have to ask ourselves, Why is that? And the answer is that we're not smart enough as people. We just cannot see

Rhymes for the Irreverent

by Yip Harburg

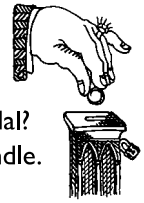
Reprinted by the Freedom From Religion Foundation

History

We learn this after every war,
That life is not worth dying for.

Life Is Liveable

They who live on love and laughter
Don't mess around with the hereafter.



Candle Power

Why fret about a little scandal?
Go to church and light a candle.

Realist

"For what we are about to receive,
Oh Lord, 'tis Thee we thank,"
Said the Cannibal as he cut a slice
Of the missionary's shank.

Federal Reserve

In '29 when the banks went bust,
Our coins still read "In God We Trust."

A Nose Is A Nose Is A Nose

Mother, Mother,
Tell me please,
Did God who gave us flowers and trees,
Also provide the allergies?

Illustrations by Seymour Chwast

Enjoy *Rhymes For The Irreverent,* penned by Yip Harburg, the lyricist who wrote "Over The Rainbow," "It's Only a Paper Moon," "Brother, Can You Spare A Dime," the musical Finian's Rainbow, and other classics. Harburg—a progressive and an atheist—will charm you with comments lyrical, whimsical and satirical. Illustrated by Seymour Chwast, **240-page hardback, $20.** (Only $15 for FFRF members. So join FFRF and save $5.)

Don't be just an armchair freethinker! **Join the Freedom From Religion Foundation,** a 501(c)(3) educational charity working since 1978 to promote nontheism and the constitutional separation between state and church. Freedom depends on freethinkers.

Join FFRF! Ask for a sample of Freethought Today, at ffrf.org. Or call (800) 335-4021.

Freedom From Religion Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 750-N, Madison WI 53701, ffrf.org/shop

❑ I would like _____ copies of *Rhymes For The Irreverent*, by Yip Harburg, for $20 each. ($15 Member price)

❑ I would like to become a member. *(Dues & donations are tax-deductible. Membership includes 10 issues of Freethought Today.)*

Annual Membership Dues

❑ Individual: $40 ❑ Household: $50 ❑ Sustaining: $100 ❑ Life Member: $1,000

Name

Address

City/State/Zip *Phone/Email*

Make check to "FFRF, Inc." (Prices U.S. only). *FFRF protects membership confidentiality and does not divulge, rent, sell, or give away its mailing list.*

Join online at: ffrf.org/membership

events that far in advance."

The obvious problem with this account is that, well, there were lots of people who predicted exactly what would happen. Michael Lewis just wrote an entire book about a handful of investors who made a fortune betting on a housing market meltdown. *The Nation*'s own William Greider and Dean Baker spent nearly the entire decade warning of the dangers of the massively inflating housing bubble. Former Commodity Futures Trading Commission chair and current FCIC member Brooksley Born famously warned of the dangers of unregulated credit default swaps, only to be shot down by, among others… Alan Greenspan. And in 2004 Chris Swecker, then the assistant director of the FBI, warned that mortgage fraud "has the potential to be an epidemic."

So Greenspan has changed his story. He now claims that he did, in fact, predict what was happening but that, predictions and foresight aside, there was really nothing he could have done. The crisis was the inevitable result of trends in global finance that stretch back at least to the fall of the Berlin Wall. "Is it fair to say that the origin of the crisis was the demand for subprime loans?" asked FCIC vice chair Bill Thomas, looking, it appeared, for an easy yes. Like an arsonist pinning the blame on Prometheus, Greenspan refused to give it to him: "The cause actually goes back to the cold war."

The list of the blameworthy in the chairman's world is long and eclectic: Fannie and Freddie, European investors, members of both houses of Congress, average borrowers and on and on. Of course, if everyone is to blame, then no one is to blame—this is the heart of Greenspan's case. In his telling, the financial crisis resembles a thunderbolt from above, an earthquake or a hurricane. An act of God.

During the premiere of *Treme*, David Simon's new HBO series about life in New Orleans three months after Hurricane Katrina, a dyspeptic English professor, played by John Goodman, lays into a journalist who has the gall to suggest that Katrina was a natural disaster. "This is not a 'natural disaster,'" he roars. "This is a man-made fucking catastrophe of epic proportions!"

As a matter of historical record and shared social witness, we all know this because we saw it. Whatever the weather, it was the man-made levees that failed, and the government, run by people, that failed to deliver the city's citizens from their watery graves.

Because there aren't the same real-time images in the case of the financial crisis, our elites seem to think they can get away with arguing that the failure was inevitable. In fact, they go so far as to marshal their own failure as evidence. "The forecast of regulators," Greenspan said, "have had a woeful record of chronic failure. Regulators cannot successfully use the bully pulpit.… Nor can regulators possibly eliminate the possibility of future crises." Quite a statement, considering he was the regulator.

Unfortunately, in the wake of the epic list of fuckups this past decade, the notion that we're helpless to make things better seems a plausible and seductive doctrine. One need only take a cursory look across the globe or back through history, however, to see that this simply isn't so. We really can do better. New Orleans may sit under sea level, but so does much of the Netherlands, and that country has developed the most sophisticated system of levees in the world, marvels of engineering that can withstand surges much more powerful than those that defeated the levees in the Gulf of Mexico. Canada has a robust and open economy, but also a regulatory regime wise, prudent and powerful enough to curtail abuses, which has managed to spare the country almost entirely from the ravages of the latest crisis. Here at home, brutal cycles of boom and bust were endemic for much of the country's history until New Deal regulation laid the foundation for a period of financial stability.

It's a blindingly obvious point, but after listening to Greenspan's phlegmatic spinning, it's crucially important to restate: as fallible as we are, as disordered as our society may be, as blinkered and epistemically constrained as regulators might be, we have throughout history consistently found better and better ways to coordinate human activity and curtail disasters, whether they be precipitated by oceans or bankers. If Greenspan couldn't figure things out, that doesn't mean others can't. In fact, developing systems for doing just that is called— quite simply—progress, and Alan Greenspan continues to be one of its enemies.

CHRISTOPHER HAYES

@TheNation.com

As Obama seeks to bring empathy and real-world experience to the Supreme Court, he should consider nominating an openly gay advocate for gay rights, urges Linda Hirshman in **Courting Change**.

Student loan reform promises fundamental change in education financing. On **The Breakdown**, Christopher Hayes and education policy analyst Ben Miller explain how reform will affect college students past, present and future.

The United States' "first use" of nuclear bombs in 1945 still matters, argues Greg Mitchell in **The Nuclear Narrative**.

Watch Katrina vanden Heuvel on *The Ed Show*, in **They Should Pay Their Fair Share**. She attacks income inequality resulting from unfair tax cuts.

On the **Dreyfuss Report** blog, Robert Dreyfuss writes that "collateral murders" have been part of US involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan since 2001.

Watch Greg Grandin on *The Charlie Rose Show*. He explains why Latin America is distancing itself politically from the United States, in **Latin America Today**.

In **Erik Erickson Joins CNN in Time for the Cruelest Month**, Leslie Savan wonders if the network will get caught in the cross-fire.

Katha Pollitt

Letter From Berlin

My German friends here are bewildered by the resistance to healthcare reform in America. They just don't get what the fuss is about. After all, thanks to Bismarck, that notorious red, Germans have had some version of national health insurance since 1884. The current system contains some of the very features that have driven Americans to throw themselves into the tea. It's mostly public—about 90 percent of the population is in the government system, with about 10 percent, mostly the wealthy and the self-employed, covered by private insurance. There's an individual mandate: you have to be covered, just the way, as my friend Barbara put it, you have to have insurance for your car. Coverage is not cheap, about 15 percent of your salary, but your employer pays nearly half, and there are government subsidies for low-income workers. Sound familiar? Do companies pass their payments on to you in the form of lower wages (or higher prices)? Probably a little bit, said Vera, but it is well worth it. I'll say: Germany has one of the best healthcare systems in the world, and it costs a lot less than ours—10.7 percent of GNP in 2005, versus our 15.2 percent. My husband has visited doctors and dentists here, and found them both excellent and amazingly accessible. Why, my friends wonder, would Americans not want something like it?

Perhaps it is because a government powerful enough to give us healthcare insurance would be strong enough to… take away our guns? The American obsession with guns is another thing that just looks weird here. German gun laws are strict. Permits are barred to people with histories of violent behavior or addiction to drugs or alcohol: to get a hunting license requires taking a challenging course on weapons and wildlife and passing a stiff exam (many fail); don't even think about carrying that licensed gun in public unless it is unloaded and in a locked container. As for the political value of the Second Amendment in defending the Republic, the idea that homeowners could hold off a tyrannical government with their individual weapons is bound to look ridiculous to people who have actually experienced fascism. By the time the government is able to put you in a concentration camp, it has overwhelming force behind it—and much, if not most, of the populace as well. Pro-gun people like to use the example of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, but the thing about that noble act of defiance is that's all it was: the Nazis smashed the resistance and shipped the survivors off to Treblinka in no time. Because of that history, it's clearer here that if you want to preserve democracy, you don't need a lot of do-it-yourselfers clomping about in the woods; you need a strong civil society, including respect for elections that don't happen to go your way.

Speaking of elections, if you believe opinion polls, roughly a third of all Americans regard Barack Obama as a flaming communist Muslim from Kenya, and 14 percent suspect he is the Antichrist himself. But here's a reality check: if Obama were a German politician, he would fit comfortably somewhere between Chancellor Angela Merkel and her free-market coalition partner Guido Westerwelle. That's because the whole electoral spectrum here is several degrees to the left of the US range; Westerwelle, a Free Democrat, is the only politician who campaigns on the neoliberal platform espoused by American politicians of both parties: competition, lower taxes, mistrust of government, the evils of welfare, the magic of the market and the virtues of making lots of money. In February he shocked the nation by comparing the welfare state to the "decadence" of the late Roman Empire. In the United States, such statements barely make the news. In fact, in the United States the only thing that would shock anyone about Westerwelle is that he's openly gay. As for Merkel, it's true that Germany is in some ways a more sexist society than the United States, with ordinary life still arranged around stay-home mothers: Sunday store closings; school days that end at lunchtime; working mothers derided by their neighbors as cold, cruel *Rabenmütter* (raven mothers); and women trapped on the lower rungs of the professions (only 13 percent of German professors are female). But you have to acknowledge that Germany has us beat in female political representation. It's not just Merkel: 32.8 percent of MPs are women.

Like the rest of Europe, Germany has problems galore. Unemployment is high; immigration, while low by US standards, has inspired xenophobia and ultranationalism; there have been big cutbacks in social programs, including healthcare and education. But as an American, I can't tell you how refreshing it is to experience a politics in which "welfare" is not a dirty word and elections don't revolve around people who think the world is 10,000 years old and can't even spell the "N-word" they plaster on their placards and posters.

* * *

Since 1997, *Nation* readers have given generously to Vacation From War, a project of the Committee for Fundamental Rights and Democracy, a German human rights group. Originally started to give Bosnian children from war zones and high-conflict areas two weeks of peace, mutual friendship and summertime fun, Vacation From War has expanded to include meetings of young people from Israel and Palestine. Imagine ninety Israeli youths and ninety Palestinians living together under one roof for two weeks and, through mutual listening and debate, getting to understand one another's perspective, and to enjoy and value one another's company. Many go on to become activists working for peace and justice—I recently met two graduates of the sessions in Berlin and was blown away by their energy, dedication and smarts. A donation of $150 makes you a "godparent." Send checks, payable to Vacation From War, to me at The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003, and I will forward them. More information at vacation-from-war.com. ■

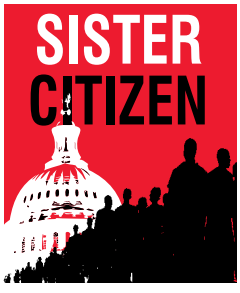
Melissa Harris-Lacewell

Black by Choice

President Obama created a bit of a stir in early April when he completed his Census form. In response to the question about racial identity the president indicated he was "Black, African American or Negro." Despite having been born of a white mother and raised in part by white grandparents, Obama chose to identify himself solely as black even though the Census allows people to check multiple answers for racial identity.

This choice disappointed some who have fought to ensure that multiracial people have the right to indicate their complex racial heritage. It confused some who were surprised by his choice not to officially recognize his white heritage. It led to an odd flurry of obvious political stories confirming that Obama was, indeed, the first African-American president.

When Obama marked his Census form, he offered another lesson in what has been an intensive if unintentional seminar on the social construction of race. In just a few years, decades of multiple racial formations have been projected onto him at hyperspeed; it's a bit like watching those nature films that show the growth of an apple tree from a seed in just thirty seconds. When Hillary Clinton held a significant lead among black voters, media outlets regularly questioned if Obama was "black enough" to earn African-American electoral support. When the Rev. Jeremiah Wright dominated the news cycle, the question shifted to whether Obama was "too black" to garner white votes. By the final months of the campaign, Obama's opponents charged that he was a noncitizen, a Muslim and a terrorist. In less than two years a single body had been subjected to definitions ranging from insufficiently black, to far too black, to somehow foreign and frightening.



But Obama did more than disrupt standard definitions of blackness; he created a definitional crisis for whiteness. Imagine for a moment that a young American falls into a Rip Van Winkle sleep in 1960. He awakens suddenly in 2008 and learns that we are in the midst of a historic presidential election between a white and a black candidate. He learns that one candidate is a Democrat, a Harvard Law School graduate, a lecturer at the conservative University of Chicago Law School. He also discovers that this candidate is married to his first wife, and they have two children who attend an exclusive private school. His running mate is an Irish Catholic. The other candidate is a Republican. He was an average student who made his mark in the military. This candidate has been married twice, and his running mate is a woman whose teenage daughter is pregnant out of wedlock.

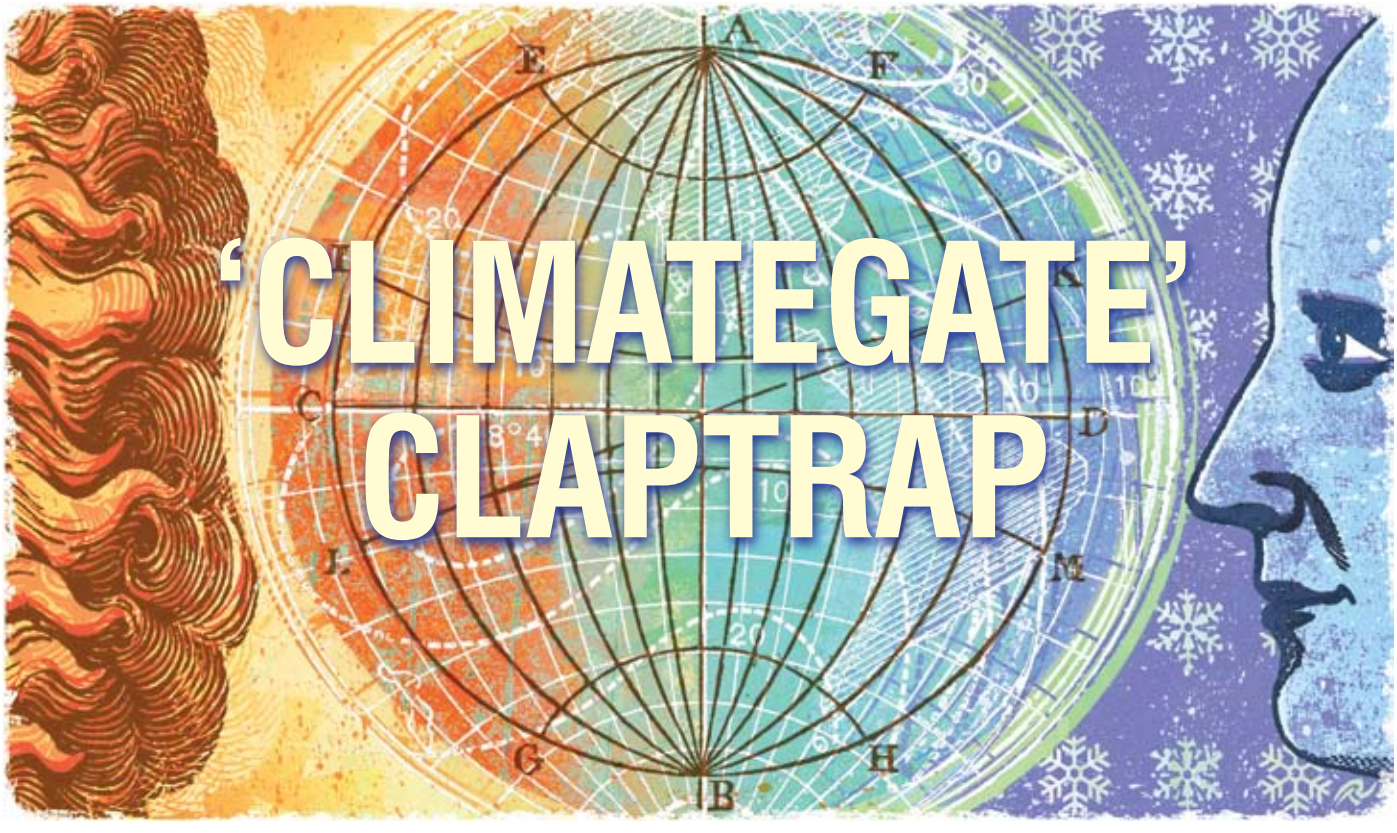
Now ask our recently awakened American to guess which candidate is white and which is black. Remember, his understanding of race and politics was frozen in 1960, when a significant number of blacks still identified themselves as Republican, an Ivy League education was a marker of whiteness and military service a common career path for young black men. Remember that he would expect marriage stability among whites and sexual immorality to mark black life. It's entirely possible that our Rip would guess that Obama was the white candidate and McCain the black one.

By displaying all these tropes of traditional whiteness, Obama's candidacy disrupted the very idea of whiteness. Suddenly whiteness was no longer about educational achievement, family stability or the command of spoken English. One might argue that the folksy interventions of Sarah Palin were a desperate attempt to reclaim and redefine whiteness as a gun-toting ordinariness that eschews traditional and elite markers of achievement.

Obama's whiteness in this sense is frightening and strange for those invested in believing that racial categories are stable, meaningful and essential. Those who yearn for a postracial America hoped Obama had transcended blackness, but the real threat he poses to the American racial order is that he disrupts whiteness, because whiteness has been the identity that defines citizenship, access to privilege and the power to define national history.

In 1998 Toni Morrison wrote that Bill Clinton was the first "black president" because he "displays almost every trope of blackness: single-parent household, born poor, working-class, saxophone-playing, McDonald's-and-junk-food-loving boy from Arkansas." Ten years later the man who truly became America's first black president displayed few of these tropes. Instead he was a scholarly, worldly, health food–eating man from Hawaii. In this sense, Obama was the white candidate in 2008, and a substantial portion of white voters preferred Obama's version of whiteness to that of McCain and Palin.

Which brings us back to Obama's Census choice. Despite his legitimate claims on whiteness, he chose to call himself black. As historian Nell Painter documents in her new book *The History of White People*, white identity was a heavily policed and protected border for most of American history. A person born to an African parent and a white parent could be legally enslaved in America until 1865. From 1877 until 1965 that person would have been subject to segregation in public accommodations, schools, housing and employment. In 1896 the Supreme Court established the doctrine of separate but equal in the case of Homer Plessy, a New Orleans Creole of color whose ancestry was only a small fraction African. President Obama's Census self-identification was a moment of solidarity with these black people and a recognition that the legal and historical realities of race are definitive, that he would have been subject to all the same legal restrictions had he been born at another time. So in April, Obama did as he has done repeatedly in his adult life: he embraced blackness, with all its disprivilege, tumultuous history and disquieting symbolism. He did not deny his white parentage, but he acknowledged that in America, for those who also have African heritage, having a white parent has never meant becoming white. ■



TIM ROBINSON

Don’t Believe the Spin

by MARK HERTSGAARD

Mark Twain famously said that there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics. He could just as easily have included polls. Advocates across the political spectrum habitually cite polls to “prove” that the public holds a certain view of a given issue, even when the truth is more complicated or even contradictory. This appears to be happening with the climate issue. As the Obama administration and Congressional leaders prepare to introduce new climate legislation, mainstream media have given fresh prominence to deniers’ claims of fraud and rampant error on the part of climate scientists. Meanwhile, surveys by Gallup and other leading pollsters are being spun as evidence that the deniers are gaining ground among the public, which is supposedly divided over whether to take action against rising temperatures and the droughts, storms and sea-level rise they trigger. A closer look, however, suggests that public opinion has changed very little. What has changed is the message coming from the media, key parts of which have reverted to their longstanding posture of scientific illiteracy and de facto complicity with the deniers’ disinformation campaign.

This abuse of polling data has a long pedigree. As a young reporter in the 1980s researching the book *On Bended Knee*, I watched the Reagan White House use polls to make fools of the mainstream media and the Democratic Party. Reagan’s advisers were forever citing polls supposedly demonstrating that the Gipper was wildly popular and thus that anyone who criticized him was taking a political risk. The truth was rather less flattering. Yes, Reagan was personally popular—most Americans thought he was a nice guy—but that had been true of almost all presidents. Ask Americans about Reagan’s policies, however, and many were indeed unhappy with his trickle-down economics and bellicose foreign policy. Nevertheless, most news organizations and Congressional Democrats swallowed the White House spin and pulled their punches. As a result, Reagan escaped sharp and sustained criticism from the opposition party and the press for most of his presidency.

Today, a similar gullibility and misreading of polls is playing into the hands of climate change deniers. The campaign to deny the science behind man-made climate change, which seemed to be losing steam a year ago, has resurged in recent months, thanks to high-profile media coverage of stolen e-mails from a British climate unit and of trivial errors in the Fourth Assessment Report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. And Fox News and the *Wall Street Journal* editorial page are no longer the only major outlets trumpeting such charges. The *New York Times*, whose veteran climate reporter, Andrew Revkin, retired in December, has subsequently run two front-page stories suggesting that the science behind climate change may not be settled after all. The *Times*’s February 9 article “U.N. Climate Panel and Its Chief Face a Siege on Their Credibility” quoted not a single mainstream climate scientist in support of its headline, noted Joseph Romm of the Center for American Progress, whose new book, *Straight Up*, blasts the media and deniers alike for misrepresenting climate science. Robert Brulle, a communications expert at Drexel University, accused the *Times* of becoming “an echo-chamber for the climate disinformation move-

ment." The deniers' agenda has been further advanced by unquestioning coverage of polls by Gallup, the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press, and other survey groups that claim to demonstrate growing public skepticism about climate change. Gallup's poll, released on March 11 and publicized internationally by Reuters, said that 48 percent of Americans now regard fears of climate change as "generally exaggerated."

All this has led environmentalists and climate deniers to assume that getting strong climate legislation through Congress will be even harder this year than last, when the weak Waxman-Markey bill barely passed the House before languishing in the Senate. Dig deeper, though, and this assumption crumbles like day-old coffee cake.

Jon Krosnick, a Stanford University professor who has been surveying Americans' views on climate change since 1995, says that, in fact, Americans remain overwhelmingly convinced that man-made climate change is happening and must be confronted. "The media is sensationalizing these polls to make it sound like the public is backing off its belief in climate change, but it's not so," argues Krosnick, who delivered a paper on the subject at an American Meteorological Association briefing in Washington a day after the Gallup poll was released. Krosnick says that Americans' views have remained quite stable over the past ten years and that in November 2009—the very time the media were full of stories about the stolen British e-mails—a whopping 75 percent of Americans said they believed that global temperatures are going up.

Krosnick, whose academic specialty is the wording of survey questions, suspects his colleagues at Gallup and elsewhere have gotten misleading results because of the way they worded their questions: their phrasing ended up testing whether Americans believed in the science of climate change rather than the phenomenon of climate change. "Most people's opinions are based not on science but on what they experience in their daily lives," Krosnick told me. "So our surveys ask people if they have heard about the idea that temperatures have been going up over the past 100 years and if they agree with this idea." The 75 percent of Americans who answered yes to that question amounts to "a huge number," says Krosnick—a far higher level of agreement than pertains on most political issues. Where climate change deniers have had an effect, he adds, is in reducing, to 31 percent, the number of Americans who think all scientists agree about climate change. "But most Americans have thought that [scientists don't all agree on climate change] for the entire fifteen years I've been polling on this issue," adds Krosnick—further tribute, it seems, to the media's longstanding habit of giving a handful of deniers prominence equal to the vast majority of scientists who affirm climate change.

Even if Krosnick is right that ordinary Americans' opinions have not changed much, it would be a mistake to conclude that the recent polls and media coverage have had no political effect. As the Reagan example illustrates, the public can hold one opinion—that Reagan's policies were unwelcome—but that opinion may have little practical effect if the governing elite in Washington believes something different. "It's not just a question of the media mischaracterizing the public's views about climate change," says Krosnick. "It is also that, because of this perception, legislators may turn against voting for climate bills they believe would be good for the country."

An assumption of lackluster public support for strong climate action may explain recent Obama administration retreats on the forthcoming climate bill. In an apparent effort to entice a few Rust Belt Democrats and less doctrinaire Republicans to back the Senate bill being co-sponsored by Massachusetts Democrat John Kerry, Connecticut independent Joseph Lieberman and South Carolina Republican Lindsey Graham, the White House has endorsed an Energy Department request for an estimated $36 billion in new loan guarantees for nuclear power plants as well as a resumption of offshore oil drilling along the Atlantic and Alaskan coasts. More nuclear plants would do little to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while resumed drilling would actually increase them, but the administration evidently believes that such is the price of attracting the sixty Senate votes needed to overcome the predictable Republican filibuster.

"I've worked on energy issues in Washington for seventeen years, and I've never seen such strong opposition from the polluters as we face now," says Anna Aurillio, director of Environment America's Washington office. "They're putting unprecedented amounts of money and effort into this fight because they know that if we get a bill through Congress, this president will sign it." At press time, the specifics of the Senate bill had not yet been released, but the battle to make the bill match rather than dodge the science of climate change will clearly be titanic. It will not be won if the deniers' narrative—that climate science is dubious and Americans don't really want action—is allowed to stand. Now is the time for journalists to get the story right and for ordinary citizens to speak out, loudly, to stiffen lawmakers' spines. Says Aurillio, "We need sixty senators to be convinced by the public, not the polluters, to do what's necessary to solve this problem." ■

Mark Hertsgaard (markhertsgaard.com), a fellow of the Open Society Institute, is The Nation*'s environment correspondent. His forthcoming book is* Hot: Living Through the Next Fifty Years on Earth.

Demented Deniers, Welcome to the USA!

by JOHANN HARI

At last! The controversy is over. It turns out the "scientific" claims promoted for decades by whiny self-righteous liberals were a lie, a fraud, a con—and we don't need to change after all. The left is humiliated; the conservatives are triumphant and exultant.

The year is 1954, and the "science" that has been exposed as a "sham" by conservatives is the link between smoking and lung cancer. Welcome to Tobaccogate, as Fox News would call it. The conservatives are championing professor Clarence

Cook Little, who says he has discovered insurmountable flaws in the use of statistics and clinical data by "anti-tobacco" (and quasi-commie) scientists. The press reports the "controversy," usually without mentioning that Cook Little is being paid by the tobacco industry. A relieved nation lights up—and so, over the next few decades, millions of them die.

It is happening again. The tide of global warming denial is now rising as fast as global sea levels—and with as much credibility as Cook Little. Look at the deniers' greatest moment, Climategate, hailed by them as "the final nail in the coffin" of "the theory of global warming." A patient study by the British House of Commons has pored over every e-mail from the Climate Research Unit at the University of East Anglia and interviewed everyone involved. Its findings? The "evidence patently fails to support" the idea of a fraud; the scientists have "no case to answer"; and all their findings "have been repeated and the conclusions have been verified" by other scientists. That's British for "it was a crock."

Yet a startling amount of denialism now, like Climategate, travels across the Atlantic from my country—Britain—to the United States. Yes, I know our accents make us sound instantly plausible, but it's time Americans knew who these Brideshead bull-scientists really are. Look, for example, at their doyen—a man named Christopher Monckton. He has been lauded by the *Wall Street Journal*, *National Review* and Rush Limbaugh for exposing the truth about global warming, and is used by the *New York Times* as a balancing voice against the claims of climate scientists. In fact, Monckton is an English aristocrat with no scientific training. He studied ancient Greece and Rome, and worked as a policy adviser for Margaret Thatcher.

Oh, and he claims he can cure HIV. Seriously. As journalist George Monbiot points out, Monckton has stated in writing that he is "responsible for invention and development of a broad-spectrum cure for infectious diseases…including… HIV." He is prone to such wild fantasies. He has stated that he persuaded Thatcher to use biological weapons in the Falklands War. He falsely claimed he is a member of the House of Lords and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize. When challenged, Monckton has admitted to a weakness for telling "stories that aren't actually true."

Yet this man is treated as a great debunker of climate science in the United States. So what's his alternative scientific theory? In a speech in Minnesota last year, he explained it. "There is no problem with the climate," except that Greenpeace is "about to impose a communist world government on the world" and "you have a president who has very strong sympathies with that point of view." Warming is an excuse invented so that Obama can "sign your freedom, your democracy and your prosperity away forever," and give it all to "third world countries."

That's the intellectual caliber of the most celebrated denialist. Yet when it comes to coverage of global warming, we are trapped in the logic of a guerrilla insurgency. The climate scientists have to be right 100 percent of the time, or their 0.01 percent error becomes Glaciergate, and they are frauds. By contrast, the deniers only have to be right 0.01 percent of the time for their narrative—See! The global warming story is falling apart!—to be reinforced by the media. It doesn't matter that their alternative theories are based on demonstrably false claims, as they are with all the leading "thinkers" in this movement. Look at the Australian geologist Ian Plimer, whose denialism is built on the claim that volcanoes produce more CO_2 than humans, even though the US Geological Survey has shown they produce 130 times less. Or *Sunday Telegraph* columnist Christopher Booker, who says the Arctic sea ice can't be retreating because each year it comes back a little… in winter.

Many Americans assume that if a story has been in the news section of a reputable English newspaper, it has been fact-checked. One recent climate "scandal" that spread from Britain shows how these stories actually originate. In its most recent report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change—the umbrella organization of the world's climate scientists—explained that 40 percent of the Amazon rainforest is at risk of dying if there is even a slight reduction in rainfall. This is true. It is the view of the most distinguished scientists in the field. The IPCC sourced this claim to a report by the World Wildlife Fund—when, in fact, it should have referred to a report by professor Dan Nepstad, whose work is mentioned only in passing by the WWF.

Many Americans assume that if a story has been in the news section of a reputable English newspaper, it has been fact-checked.

It was a minor footnoting error—but when a denialist blogger named Richard North noticed it, he announced he had found the IPCC making fake predictions. He tipped off the *Sunday Times*, owned by Fox king Rupert Murdoch. The newspaper's journalists quoted Dr. Simon Lewis, a leading rainforest expert, who explained that it was a very minor mistake and that the core claim is accurate. The paper ignored the bulk of his comments and mangled his quotes to make it sound like he agreed that the IPCC had been talking rubbish—and ran the "story" under the headline "UN Climate Panel Shamed by Bogus Rainforest Claim." It gave credit for "research by Richard North." The story was then zapped all over the United States as Amazongate, and as a result millions of people are now under the impression that the Amazon is in no danger. The *Sunday Times* refuses to admit it made a whopping error—in a story that attacks the IPCC for supposedly making a whopping error.

And while the United States has been engaged in these fake rows, the world may have just crashed into one of the climate's tipping points. For years, climate scientists have had a nightmare scenario. Buried in the hard Arctic permafrost is a massive amount of the gas methane, which causes thirty times more warming than carbon dioxide. There is more carbon in

the world's methane deposits than in every lump of coal and barrel of oil on earth. As the poles defrost, it becomes possible that all of this gas will be farted out into the atmosphere—and trigger catastrophic warming.

Over the past year, culminating this March, a series of major on-the-ground scientific investigations of the frozen methane have been published. The author of one, Professor Tim Minshull, explained: "Our survey was designed to work out how much methane might be released by future ocean warming; we did not expect to discover such strong evidence that this process has already started." If you hold a match to the ground, a great flash of methane-fire now bursts forth.

Looking back, the historian Allan Brandt said the conservative-corporate machine that conned people into thinking smoking was safe pulled off "the crime of the century." We are now witnessing the crime of the twenty-first century, using the same strung-out old script. In his smoky hell, Clarence Cook Little must be offering a little chuckle. ■

Johann Hari is a columnist for the Independent *in London and a contributing writer for* Slate. *He has been named Newspaper Journalist of the Year by Amnesty International for his reporting from the war in Congo.*

The Case for EPA Action

The agency has the tools to regulate greenhouse gases—if Congress doesn't take them away.

by CHRISTIAN PARENTI

On April 1 the Environmental Protection Agency established rules restricting greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks, starting in 2012. This is the first of what could become a sweeping series of regulations stemming from the agency's conclusion that greenhouse gases harm human health. If the EPA were to act robustly, it could achieve significant and immediate greenhouse gas emissions reductions using nothing more than existing laws and current technology. Doing so would signal to a waiting world that America is serious about addressing climate change.

CHRISTOPHER SERRA

But a dangerous assault on the agency is gathering momentum in Congress, corporate boardrooms, the media and the courts. The swarm of counterattacks all seek to strip the EPA of its power to regulate greenhouse gas emissions from stationary sources like coal-fired power plants. Some legislative proposals would even undo the EPA's finding that greenhouse gases are hazardous, taking the EPA out of the climate fight altogether.

Wonkish at first glance, the fight over EPA rulemaking may be the most important environmental battle in a generation. The UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change says rich countries like the United States must cut emissions 25 to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2020—only ten years away—and thereafter make precipitous cuts to almost zero emissions. If we don't act now, average global temperatures will likely increase by more than 2 degrees Celsius and trigger self-compounding runaway climate change, resulting in a massive rise in sea levels, devastated agriculture and attendant social chaos. Not one of the climate change bills up for discussion meets this threshold, and it is looking increasingly unlikely that Congress will be able to pass any comprehensive climate change legislation this session. The failures of Congress and the harrowing facts of climate science mean that aggressive and immediate EPA action is essential.

From a legal perspective, the EPA has all the tools it needs to respond adequately to the climate crisis. In fact, "the United States has the strongest environmental laws in the world," says Kassie Siegel, an attorney with the Center for Biological Diversity. The center specializes in suing the government when it violates green laws. "We don't need new legislation. The Clean Air Act can achieve everything we need: a 40 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions over 1990 levels by 2020."

The two most important things the EPA can do are to halt any permitting of new coal-fired power plants—about fifty new plants are seeking approval—and to force all existing coal-fired facilities to make the technologically feasible switch to natural gas. If this "fuel switching" happened, total nonvehicle US emissions would be reduced by 13 percent or more in a matter of a year or two, say various experts. Natural gas is generally half as polluting as coal. But in the case of old, inefficient coal-fired plants, switching to gas can reduce emissions by as much as two-thirds.

And there is plenty of natural gas: discoveries have glutted the market, and prices are down more than 60 percent from their recent peak. Gas is not a solution; it merely offers a realistic "bridging fuel" as we move toward power generated from wind, solar, geothermal and hydro sources.

Perhaps the most far-reaching impact of EPA regulation would be to put a de facto price on carbon by leveling fines on greenhouse gas polluters. Such penalties could reach thousands per day, per violation. If targets for emissions reductions are tough enough, few coal plants will be able to meet them and will instead pay fines—what amounts to a carbon

Christian Parenti, a Nation *contributing editor and visiting scholar at the CUNY Graduate Center, is the author of* The Freedom: Shadows and Hallucinations in Occupied Iraq *(New Press). He is working on a book about climate change and war.*

tax. Then a cheap source of energy would become expensive, which would drive investment away from fossil fuels toward carbon-neutral forms of energy.

At first, President Obama seemed ready to use executive power to do an end run around a sclerotic Congress, when he authorized the EPA to start regulating greenhouse gas emissions under the Clean Air Act. Obama was merely complying with the law: the EPA has been mandated to act since 2007, when the Supreme Court ruled, in *Massachusetts v. EPA*, that the agency should determine whether greenhouse gases threaten our health. The Bush administration refused to use this authority, but when Obama took office he allowed the EPA to do its job again.

This past December the EPA published a science-based "endangerment finding," which found that CO_2 and five other greenhouse gases are, in fact, dangerous to human life. Once the EPA issues an endangerment finding, it is legally bound to promulgate regulations to address the problem; the first of these were the vehicle emissions reductions announced on April 1.

Now the EPA is following up by drafting regulations for stationary greenhouse gas sources. Called a tailoring rule, it will stipulate when, where and how greenhouse gas pollution must be controlled. At first the agency said it would regulate facilities emitting 25,000 tons or more of greenhouse gases per year. But pressure from fossil fuel industries and Congress has caused the EPA to backpedal to a threshold of 75,000 tons per year, a limit the EPA could raise to 100,000 tons by the time its tailoring rule is finalized.

In February, Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia sent a letter urging EPA administrator Lisa Jackson to delay the implementation of greenhouse gas point source review. Signing on with Rockefeller were seven other Democratic senators, all but one from the nation's top coal-producing states. In response, Jackson pushed back any new regulations until 2011—conveniently after this fall's midterm election. Rockefeller wasn't satisfied and has since introduced legislation seeking to suspend EPA action until after 2012.

Because the tailoring rule is not yet final, the whole issue of stationary source regulation could get put off indefinitely, or be pre-empted by climate change legislation that strips the EPA of its regulatory powers.

The fight over the EPA's role goes back to 1997, when President Clinton signed, but could not get the Senate to ratify, the Kyoto Protocol. Searching for a way around the Senate's blockade, Clinton's EPA administrator, Carol Browner—now director of the White House Office of Energy and Climate Change Policy—took the position that the EPA was already authorized to regulate greenhouse gas emissions under the 1970 Clean Air Act. Soon a coalition of green groups, including Greenpeace and the Center for Biological Diversity, petitioned the EPA to start taking action.

The specter of muscular regulations from the EPA caused near-panic among major polluters. In late 1999 the American Petroleum Institute, the trade association of the oil and gas industry, called a meeting of major industrial corporations; twenty-eight executives attended, representing the National Association of Manufacturers and the Chamber of Commerce, as well as the aluminum, airline, chemical, electrical power, aerospace, cement, fertilizer, coal and oil industries. The leaked minutes of that meeting revealed a plan to spin the issue of EPA regulation in the media, to fight it in the courts and push legislation that would strip the EPA of regulatory power. The executives also agreed to pressure the EPA directly to reject the petition filed by the green groups.

The plan worked; Browner backed off. Then the Bush administration stacked the EPA's ranks with fossil fuel–loving loyalists. When climate change regulation again became an issue in 2009, the industry's counterattack was already in place. Thus, both the House climate bill (Waxman-Markey, which passed in June 2009) and the Senate bill (Kerry-Lieberman-Graham, still under consideration) contain language restricting the EPA's power to control greenhouse gas pollution from stationary sources.

Now even more toxic legislation is gathering support. Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska—aided by corporate lobbyists like Jeffrey Holmstead, formerly with the Bush EPA and now head of environmental strategies for the lobbying firm Bracewell & Giuliani, and Roger Martella Jr., a partner at Sidley Austin—has written a resolution that would overturn the EPA's original greenhouse gas endangerment finding.

FORGET THE TEA PARTY
★ HERE'S THE REAL PARTY ★
THE LIVING LIBERALLY 2010 ANNUAL CELEBRATION

★ HONORING ★
SERVICE EMPLOYEES INTERNATIONAL UNION
FOR PROMOTING A PROGRESSIVE AMERICA AND BEING A GREAT ALLY TO THE NETROOTS
DR. MARION NESTLE
AUTHOR OF "WHAT TO EAT" AND "FOOD POLITICS"
FOR HER FEARLESS CHAMPIONING OF THE GRASSROOTS GOOD FOOD MOVEMENT
★ WITH GUEST HOST LAURA FLANDERS OF GRITTV ★

MAY DAY ★ SATURDAY, MAY 1 ★ 7-11 PM
DCTV ★ 87 LAFAYETTE ST ★ NYC

Thanks to Our Partners: Alternet, American Independent News Network, Blue State Digital, DailyKos, Democrats.com, MoveOn, and The Nation

Visit livingliberally.org/celebration for more information.

NOBODY OWNS THE NATION.

Not GE (or Comcast). Not Disney. Not Murdoch or Time Warner. We are a wholly owned subsidiary of our own conscience.

This independence is why great writers have always used *The Nation* as an Early Warning System—to expose before it's too late the frauds, felonies and follies of the all–too–private enterprise we call Our Government.

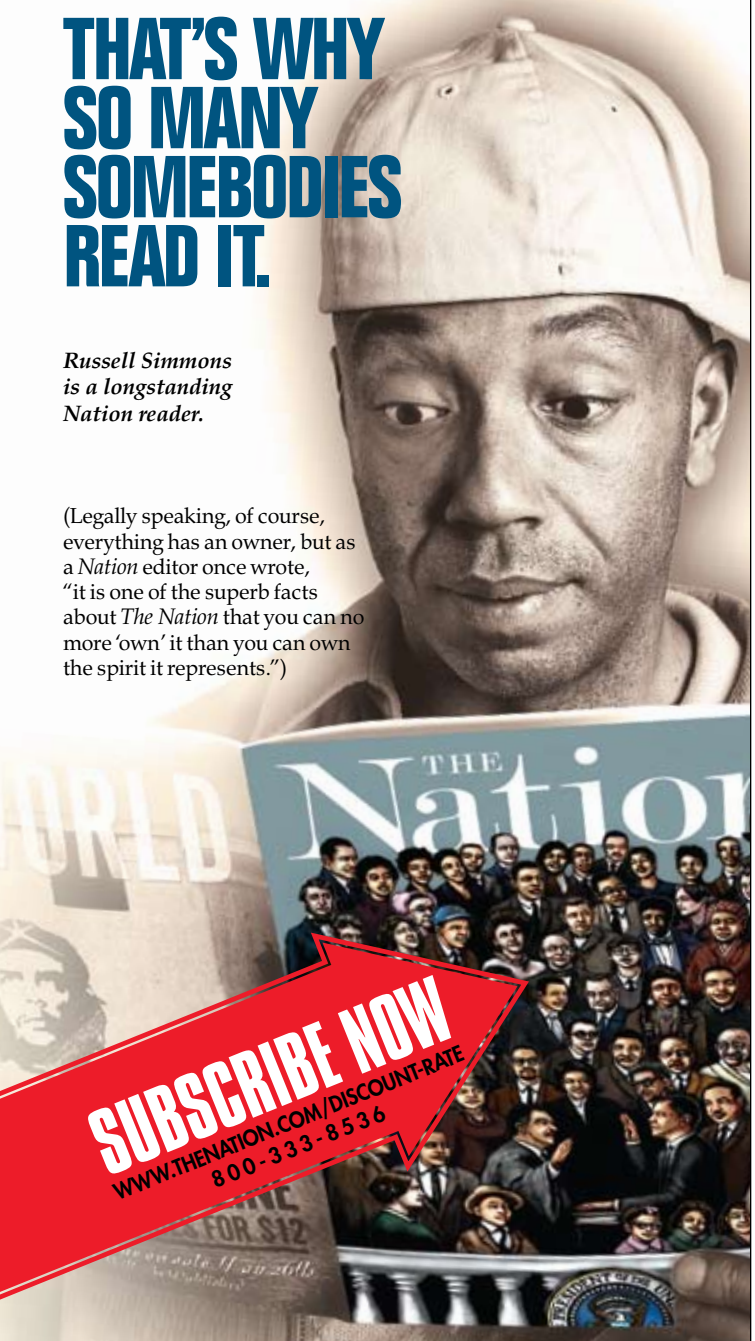
And it's why week in, week out we're read by an audience as illustrious as our authors.

If you believe, as our readers do, that the highest form of patriotism is demanding to know exactly what Government's doing in your name, why not sign on today at this very low rate? You can save a lot—not least of which could be your country.

THAT'S WHY SO MANY SOMEBODIES READ IT.

Russell Simmons is a longstanding Nation reader.

(Legally speaking, of course, everything has an owner, but as a *Nation* editor once wrote, "it is one of the superb facts about *The Nation* that you can no more 'own' it than you can own the spirit it represents.")



Alaska is a big oil, gas and coal producer, and Murkowski is one of the top recipients of petroleum industry campaign donations. So far this year she has received $188,000; only two senators, Democrat Blanche Lincoln and Republican David Vitter, have received more oil and gas money than Murkowski.

Murkowski's resolution was introduced January 21 under the little-used Congressional Review Act, which means it needs only fifty-one votes to pass and cannot be blocked from a vote by Senate majority leader Harry Reid. Although it is called a "resolution of disapproval," it would have the force of law. So far forty other senators are on board, including three Democrats—Mary Landrieu of Louisiana, Blanche Lincoln of Arkansas and Ben Nelson of Nebraska.

In the House, Joe Barton, a Republican from Texas, has written a companion resolution of disapproval. Not surprisingly, Barton is tight with polluters; over the past two decades he has received more than $2.7 million in direct campaign contributions from electrical utilities and the petroleum industry.

Obama would, by all accounts, veto the Murkowski or Barton bill. But their point is not so much to gut the EPA in Congress as it is to intimidate, delay, confuse and blunt into irrelevance any EPA action. Other pushbacks are taking the form of lawsuits and petitions from the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and fossil fuel lobbies. Fifteen states have filed suits seeking to block the EPA's endangerment ruling, and at least seventeen state legislatures have seen bills introduced to strip EPA powers. None of these efforts are likely to achieve their stated goals, but they are all part of a right-wing and corporate strategy to send a message to Obama and the Senate, where real EPA-stripping could happen if Kerry-Lieberman-Graham passes.

Behind much of this state-level pressure is money from Charles and David Koch, petroleum magnates who are increasingly notorious for funding far-right ventures such as FreedomWorks, a tea party organizer, and think tanks that traffic in climate-change denial. One of their organizations, Americans for Prosperity, is running a Regulation Reality Tour, which is trying to whip up outrage about the "EPA's power grab." Part of this Astroturf campaign involves political theater: fake "carbon cops" in little green Smart cars with flashing lights pull out badges and issue citations for carbon "crimes" like mowing a lawn.

But green groups are organized to fight back and are having some success, as witnessed by the EPA's recently issued regulations under the Clean Water Act, which will sharply curtail mountaintop removal [see Eshelman, page 17]. Unfortunately, many big environmental groups in Washington have not made defending the EPA a priority. Most endorsed Waxman-Markey, and in late March twenty of the biggest groups came out in support of the still-unpublished Kerry-Lieberman-Graham bill. Those groups included the Alliance for Climate Protection, Environment America, the League of Conservation Voters, Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation, Blue Green Alliance, Natural Resources Defense Council, Center for American Progress Action Fund

and Union of Concerned Scientists. The Sierra Club has switched to defending the EPA and opposing any climate change bill that strips the agency of its power; other environmental groups may soon follow.

So where is the Obama administration? The president says he prefers climate legislation to EPA regulation. That is an unnecessary concession; Obama does not need to wait for Congress. In this situation, American politics is not hostage to an obstructionist right-wing fringe or the lack of a sixty-vote supermajority. Existing laws allow—even require—broad and robust action.

Throughout American history the executive branch has steadily been accruing power. Before the 1930s presidents rarely proposed legislation. Even LBJ worried that his phone calls to lobby senators could violate the "separation of powers doctrine." Nixon created the EPA in 1970 precisely to concentrate more power in the hands of the executive. He gathered up all the existing environmental programs, gave them no extra money and put them in one agency, which answered to a director appointed by the president. The Bush administration practically searched the vest pockets of bureaucrats to find ways (often illegal) to enhance presidential prerogatives.

And the current president?

"Obama, like Bush before him, is happy to assert unlimited executive authority when it comes to the war on terror, detention without trial, warrantless wiretapping," says Brendan Cummings, senior counsel at the Center for Biological Diversity. "But when it comes to addressing global warming, he refuses to use his clear and lawful executive power to reduce greenhouse pollution to protect people and the planet."

"Heading into an election, I think, the administration is very leery of offending powerful corporate interests," says Tyson Slocum of Public Citizen. "That is especially true when those corporate interests make campaign expenditures in swing states."

Other greens agree. "At stake in the fight over the EPA's ability to address global warming pollution is not only the president's environmental record but really the core promise of his presidency, to change the way Washington works," says Kert Davies, director of research at Greenpeace USA. "The year behind us on energy and climate policy shows what you get when the Obama administration's seeming compulsion for compromise meets the entrenched power of the coal, oil and nuclear industries."

Tragically, climate change is not an issue where compromise will work. Bad healthcare bills can be improved; but on the climate front, time has run out. Atmospheric CO_2 concentrations are at 390 parts per million and need to go back to 350 ppm. Already, oyster farms in the Pacific Northwest are in decline because of ocean acidification caused by climate change. Last year many Midwestern crops were too rain-soaked to harvest. Drought, likely linked to climate change, is battering much of Latin America, Africa and Asia. Everywhere signs of nature's unraveling are evident.

Allowing Congress to strip the EPA of its review powers or letting the administration dither away its responsibility to act boldly would be a disaster. The EPA is our last, best hope. ■

Cracking Big Coal

Environmentalists chalk up wins on the ground, putting coal companies on the defensive.

by ROBERT S. ESHELMAN

Scott Parkin, an organizer at the San Francisco–based Rainforest Action Network (RAN), is a straight-talking, get-things-done kind of guy, more at ease toiling behind the scenes in environmental struggles than serving as a personification of them. Yet in his fight against the coal industry he has embodied the qualities that define a new-model environmental movement in the United States. In the past four years this reinvigorated, multifaceted movement has chalked up an impressive—albeit frequently overlooked—series of victories against Big Coal, a leading contributor to domestic greenhouse gas emissions and a powerful lobby whose influence stretches from Congress to rural West Virginia courthouses.

CHRISTOPHER SERRA

A decade ago, the coal and utility industries began to push for the construction of a new generation of coal-fired power plants. Since then, 232 plants have been proposed. The environmental justice movement has defeated 127 of them. Not a single coal-fired plant was built in 2009. This past March, following several modest moves toward greater scrutiny of mountaintop removal permits in the past year, the Environmental Protection Agency announced that it was moving to block authorization of the largest mountaintop removal site in West Virginia, held by Arch Coal, an industry leader. Then, on April 1, the EPA proposed new water quality regulations for future mountaintop removal permits—imposing standards that very few, if any, mountaintop removal proposals would meet, as EPA head Lisa Jackson noted.

These victories have seriously set back—if not yet van-

Robert S. Eshelman is an independent journalist. His articles have appeared in Abu Dhabi's the National, In These Times *and on TomDispatch.com.*

quished—an industry that accounts for nearly 40 percent of US greenhouse gas emissions and powers roughly half of US energy production. It's as if the antiwar movement had brought the military's recruitment efforts to a grinding halt. The coal industry's ability to do harm—to the climate generally and to communities living in the shadow of coal plants or mining sites locally—has been significantly curtailed, and many in the environmental movement are beginning to speculate about the beginning of the end for Big Coal.

Since joining RAN in 2006, Parkin has traveled extensively in Appalachia, where organizations such as Coal River Mountain Watch, Kentuckians for the Commonwealth and Appalachian Voices are waging a fierce struggle to end mountaintop removal—a surface coal-mining technique that has leveled 500 bucolic Appalachian peaks, filled more than 2,000 miles of valley streams with toxic sludge and poisoned drinking-water supplies in West Virginia, Kentucky and Tennessee. "The people who live and work there are some of the more inspiring figures you're going to meet in the environmental justice movement," he says. "Once you experience the situation there and the way they struggle, you don't want to let go; you want to do everything you can to support these people and work on this campaign."

In Appalachia, Parkin has worked to foster relationships between RAN and local and regional groups—many of them women-led or whose rank and file include former unionized underground mine workers—and nonviolent direct-action organizations, such as Climate Ground Zero and Rising Tide North America. Back at RAN's San Francisco offices, Parkin leads the group's Global Finance campaign, which targets banking institutions, such as JPMorgan Chase, that fund mountaintop removal mining or the construction of coal-fired power plants. Thus, his activist work touches upon nearly every aspect of the coal process—from extraction to electricity production to the warming of the climate—and uses tactics ranging from public education and corporate pressure campaigns to local grassroots leadership development among Appalachians directly affected by mining, and nonviolent civil disobedience against mining companies or the EPA.

Parkin's organizing approach reflects that of the anti-coal movement more broadly—embracing a sophisticated diversity of tactics and targets, an emphasis on building strong relationships between traditional environmentalists and residents of Appalachia, and an unflinching determination to shut down Big Coal wherever it attempts to go.

So how did this movement pull off such decisive victories?

Parkin says it's all about "swarming"—the diversity of tactics and targets. It's a strategy that shuns delusions of a single silver-bullet solution to euthanizing the coal industry—say, a binding UN climate agreement or comprehensive climate change bill in the Senate. Instead, the environmental justice movement has come to recognize that Big Coal's broad influence and its central role in energy production make it extremely vulnerable. Each point along the continuum of coal production—from finance to extraction to burning—becomes terrain for political struggle. The movement's all-of-the-above strategy—essentially, bringing to bear every available tactic to each register of the public and private sectors—has transformed Big Coal's reach from asset to liability.

"We've beaten back the coal industry by utilizing all the tools available—a robust organizing effort, litigation and public education," says Bruce Nilles, head of the Sierra Club's Beyond Coal campaign. "Wherever the coal industry is proposing these projects, we've got Sierra Club members in those areas." At the height of the rush to build new coal plants, the Sierra Club was filing a lawsuit every ten days and ensuring that its members voiced opposition to every project.

Crucial to the success of any of these tactics have been the links between poor and working-class Appalachians and mainstream environmentalists, which Parkin, among others, has spent years cultivating. These links have imbued the mainstream environmental justice movement with purpose and brought attention to Big Coal's economic impacts in coal country. The industry continually argues that the economic well-being of the region is tied to whether coal remains the primary producer of domestic energy. Poverty and infant mortality rates in Appalachia, however, are among the highest in the nation, and county governments throughout the region are shuttering schools and government offices. Mining activity there increased 22 percent between 1985 and 2005, while the number of mining jobs decreased 55 percent, because of the proliferation of surface and mountaintop removal mining, which require far smaller labor pools than underground mining. And, as the recent disaster in West Virginia demonstrates, coal extraction remains a very hazardous activity, especially in those mines owned by Massey Energy—a company with a long list of safety violations and headed by climate change denier Don Blankenship, one of the nastiest coal barons in US history and bagman for Republican politicians. Coal is a resource curse for Appalachia, which mirrors conditions in kleptocratic third world nations, where multinationals and governments prosper and populations continually toil in poverty.

"In Appalachia there is a tremendous intersection between issues of economic class and the environment," says Parkin.

By focusing on the effects of coal on Appalachia, the mainstream environmental justice movement has subtly transformed the climate change debate from one about what the world might look like several decades from now to one highlighting how the coal industry is destroying the environment and people's lives—primarily among the poor and working class—today.

More than 600 coal-fired power plants in the United States—many of them fully amortized and thus enormous cash cows for utility companies—spew massive amounts of pollutants that poison the air and water, as well as contribute to climate change. Nearly 200 permits for mountaintop removal sites await EPA approval, and Big Coal is expanding operations in the Powder River Basin of Montana and Wyoming and the Illinois Basin. It is also eyeing environmentally sensitive areas in Alaska. So what's next for the environmental justice movement?

Kassie Siegel of the Center for Biological Diversity says that using existing clean-water and clean-air laws will be cru-

An Open Letter and Appeal to Bill McKibben and 350.org

From Lorna Salzman

Dear Bill: many environmental activists, including myself, have applauded your work and your writings for years and we know they have had a positive impact on many members of the general public. Most recently, your 350.org organization has helped publicize the climate change issue and thus has led the mass media to an acknowledgement of the impeccable scientific argument justifying this 350 figure: a rapid reduction in atmospheric CO2 from the present 389 parts per million (ppm) back down to 350, the single most effective way available at present to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

But I am troubled by the inexplicable fact that neither you nor 350.org has proposed specific actions, policies or legislation to actually reach that goal. The need for articulating these details is especially urgent, as the U. S. congress continues to not only debate over the goal itself but has, at the urging of special interests such as the coal, nuclear and oil industries and major corporations involved in biofuels and agribusiness, de-fanged the Waxman/Markey energy bill in congress so as to minimize their own responsibilities and maximize their profits. This bill comes uncomfortably close to being a denial of the facts about global warming.

Even some of the major national environmental groups like Natural Resources Defense Council and Environmental Defense Fund have aligned themselves not with the best science or the public interest but with corporations in the coalition called US Climate Action Partnership (USCAP), seeking modern "indulgences", namely carbon permit trading, called cap-and-trade, which will allow the indefinite operation of coal-fueled power plants, the major source of CO2, whose rapid shut-down should be the centerpiece of any sane energy policy. Despite such a carbon market in Europe, energy consumption there continues to rise each year.

In addition to this scheme, which will create yet another market in derivatives like the one that has shredded our economy and enriched brokers and traders, (including Al Gore, founder of a carbon trading firm), new coal-fired plants are on the drawing board, with their owners passing on the costs to the government (i.e.public) of pie-in-the-sky speculative schemes for carbon capture and storage (CCS), yet another of the ill-advised subsidies to the energy sector that keep energy too cheap to spur serious energy conservation or alternatives. All this is in addition to the tens of billions of dollars in loan guarantees that Pres. Obama is urging for nuclear reactors that the private sector, quite rationally, refuses to invest in and which are neither safe nor cheap and which will deprive renewable energy technologies of the necessary capital and public support.

The central problem, as you well know, is that none of these schemes has any chance of making a dent in the climate problem in the time frame remaining to us. Expert scientists and scientific bodies now unanimously agree that we have less than ten years to reduce the CO2 concentration to 350 ppm to avoid increasing the global temperature more than 2 degrees Centigrade above pre-industrial times.

Beyond this period, irreversible and uncontrollable feedback will occur from disappearing ice sheets, melting permafrost and ocean warming, reducing biodiversity, destroying coral reefs, acidifying the oceans, raising sea level, and leading inevitably to crises in drinking water, food production, land use and public health that will cost societies far more than it will cost to mitigate or avoid these impacts. Recent scientific conferences addressed the strong possibility that the earth's temperature will increase within this century or soon after by up to six degrees Centigrade, a level not experienced on earth in tens of millions of years.

In this period, absent a plan to phase out existing coal plants and mandate serious cuts in energy use, fossil fuel consumption will continue to rise as it has since 1990, by 2% each year. Regrettably, renewable energy technologies, however well funded, will not become sufficiently operative in time to head off a climate emergency since it takes 50 years to completely replace an energy system and economy.

The obvious solution, urgent if only partial, is to cut energy consumption quickly and drastically in all sectors and on all fronts, using whatever strategies are needed: a transparent carbon tax on fossil fuels at their point of extraction, production or import; an end to all fossil fuel subsidies and tax breaks; stringent mandatory energy efficiency standards and measures for all sectors, especially new construction; and gasoline rationing, among other things.

It is imperative that energy prices increase to reflect the full costs of production and their impact on the atmosphere and climate change. Cheap energy created the problem; that era must end as soon as possible.

Yet your group, 350. org, and you personally, have chosen NOT to propose any specific strategy or route to achieve that reduction down to 350 ppm. Many of us are truly puzzled, even aghast, at your reluctance to follow through in an effective and honest way.

We know that you are well informed on the issue and we see proof of your concern and dedication. You are looked to as a leader and spokesman. You influence public discourse. But all your work will come to naught if the energy legislation now in congress moves forward in its present form and your organization does not step up to the bat and help shape a serious, science-based national energy policy in Washington.

All of us need to pull together with a unified, honest and scientifically credible legislative agenda. I therefore make this personal plea to you to put your own reputation and that of 350.org on the line, and join groups like ClimateSOS and Rising Tide in opposing any legislation that includes carbon trading and fossil/nuclear energy subsidies, and which does not propose massive immediate cuts in energy consumption across the board.

Anything less than this would be intellectually dishonest on all our parts. If we truly believe that we must cut back to 350 ppm within five years, there is no alternative to shunting the existing energy legislation (ACESA) aside and replacing it with an uncompromising muscular piece of legislation. Anything else would literally doom our civilization.

(Salzman is an environmental writer, lecturer and activist who, starting in the early 1970s worked for major national environmental organizations as well as the NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection. She was the Suffolk County Green Party candidate for congress in 2002, and in 2004 she sought the presidential nomination of the U.S. Green Party. Contributions to defray the cost of this ad are welcome; please contact the author at:lsalzman1@verizon.net. Her web site is: www.lornasalzman.com)

cial. "The number-one, most important thing in my mind that we need to do to prevent another coal rush is to save the Clean Air Act. The coal industry, aided by people like Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, has a full-out assault on the Clean Air Act right now." Siegel adds that the act, along with other environmental protections, will help to cut the supply chain, forcing utilities to purchase more expensive—and in-demand—international supplies, which might cause them to reconsider coal altogether.

Other groups, particularly those in Appalachia, are targeting state legislatures and Congress, pushing for passage of an array of environmental protections, including the Clean Water Protection Act in the House and the Appalachia Restoration Act in the Senate, which would strengthen existing water pollution regulations by prohibiting valley fills. Meanwhile, direct-action groups are proceeding with plans for shutting down mountaintop removal mines in Appalachia and pressuring the EPA for more clean air and water regulations.

Essentially, the movement will continue to "swarm" but will also seek to consolidate its victories and build on them. "From the EPA to Wall Street, we've had recent success using a variety of tactics," says Parkin. "Now we need to continue the momentum and keep our eyes on the prize of ending our dependence on coal." ■

Offset Buyers Beware

To Western consumers, carbon offsets sound good on paper—but the devil is in the details.

by HEATHER ROGERS

Even though climate legislation is stalled in Congress, the business of voluntary carbon offsets is thriving, thanks to the abundant guilt and concern of the world's most wasteful consumers. Not only does Al Gore pay to counteract his heat-trapping gases; so do Hillary Clinton, Arnold Schwarzenegger and high-profile gatherings including the Oscars. Companies have formed mostly in the United States, Europe and Canada to sell the notional product that is offsets. Now it seems easy for celebrities, businesses and regular consumers to neutralize the damage from burning electricity, hopping a plane or hitting the highway.

CHRISTOPHER SERRA

Carbon-offset firms have no storefronts; they promote themselves and sell their wares on the Internet. Visit one of their sites, calculate your emissions, fork over a fee via credit card and the firm will send a portion of your payment to an earth-friendly project. Greenhouse gases released in high-consuming Western countries can be balanced out anywhere; as they say in the industry, the atmosphere isn't picky about where carbon is cut. Using cheap land and labor in developing countries offers more bang for the buck, so that's where most efforts are carried out. China and India have the vast majority of offset projects, with the latter hosting nearly a quarter of all such ventures globally.

Offset companies' web pages typically feature photos of deep blue skies, towering windmills and banks of resplendent solar panels—the antithesis of pollution. On its site, the trusted Swiss offsetter Myclimate reassuringly tenders "climate protection." Among its clients the company counts Coca-Cola, Ben & Jerry's, Unilever and Virgin Atlantic. Another big offset player, The CarbonNeutral Company, has serviced the likes of Brad Pitt and the Rolling Stones, Coldplay, Jake Gyllenhaal and Sky, the UK-based television and communications firm. The CarbonNeutral Company posits that settling one's carbon debt is relatively simple. Its site states the CO_2 offsetting promise: "Buying one tonne of carbon offsets means there will be one less tonne of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than there would otherwise have been." Paying to restore carbon balance, an act of consumption itself, signals that we can keep consuming and save the planet.

But carbon offsets are a dubious enterprise. To begin with, they don't cut greenhouse gases immediately but only over the life of a project, and that can take years—some tree-planting efforts need a century to do the work. And a project is effective only if it's successfully followed through; trees can die or get cut down, unforeseen ecological destruction might be triggered or the projects may simply go unbuilt. As for keeping track of all this, although many retail offsetters choose to get third-party certification to assure quality, they are not obliged to do so, because the voluntary market is largely unregulated. These projects aren't required by law to meet any standards or have follow-up assessments to ascertain their efficacy. (Offsets under the Kyoto Protocol are regulated, but inspectors charged with this oversight don't always maintain the highest standards.)

So what's actually going on in the places where these guilt- and carbon-scrubbing projects materialize? What impacts are offset ventures having on local people and the regional environment? I visited the state of Karnataka in southern India to better understand what transpires after a consumer sitting at her computer in New York City, Toronto or London clicks the Offset My Carbon Now button and pays with a credit card.

Among its various projects on Myclimate's website, I find

Heather Rogers's new book is Green Gone Wrong: How Our Economy Is Undermining the Environmental Revolution *(Scribner), from which this article is adapted. She is a senior fellow at Demos. Research support for the article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute.*

two green energy ventures the offsetter is helping to finance. Instead of burning fossil fuels, these operations run on organic material such as dead palm fronds, sugar cane leaves and rice straw left in the fields after harvest. Unlike coal, oil and natural gas, which release concentrations of carbon stored up over millenniums when organic matter is burned, it emits no more CO_2 than the plant took in while growing. Biomass energy, as it's referred to, is carbon balanced from the start.

One of Myclimate's projects is with a Bangalore-based company called Decentralized Energy Systems India, or DESI. Myclimate is contributing to DESI's effort to install biogas power plants (a variation on biomass) in 100 villages—a major undertaking. According to DESI, each power station costs about $200,000 to build, which means the 100-village project will run a hefty $20 million.

When I go to DESI's office I ask for information on the venture. The woman I talk to, who is in charge of the project's social programs, tells me DESI has no literature. She also claims the only photos of this three-year-old endeavor are on the computer of DESI's chairman, and he's not here. What can she tell me about the social programs that DESI claims have created scores of new jobs? She can't recall any specifics. "I'll have to get back to you with that information." (DESI now posts on its web page information on the project and photos it claims are of project sites.)

What I do find out at DESI's office is that the offset venture is a family affair. DESI is chaired by K.S. Sharan, whose brother and nephew run the firm that makes the biomass units. Another brother heads up operations on the ground—in a region where the family originates from and on land the family owns. And, despite DESI's evasiveness about the workings of its project, the company has a third-party certifier to guarantee quality: Sharan's daughter.

A few days later I see an article in a local newspaper that quotes DESI's chairman saying the company secures 50 percent of its investments from selling carbon credits. The project's next phase entails installing twenty new plants in the coming eighteen months—that's $2 million in offset money. The 100-village project is a serious windfall for the Sharan clan.

I find another biomass energy project on Myclimate's site. The station is called Malavalli Power Plant Ltd., or MPPL, and in addition to funds from Myclimate the project has received money from several other offset entities based in the United States, Canada and France. I visit MPPL's website. There I read that the 4.5 megawatt facility's green electricity is distributed to surrounding underserved villages and delivers social benefits, including new jobs for locals. Among the positions MPPL claims to have created are those inside the plant as well as metering, issuing and collecting bills, "complaints recording" and processing and selling compost made from the facility's waste ash. According to the company, some of these jobs go to village women through empowerment self-help groups.

The project bears the approval of the most highly regarded third-party certifier of voluntary offsets, Gold Standard. A Gold Standard case study of MPPL states that the power plant "provides reliable energy for 18 hours per day and with improved voltage." My translator and I drive two hours southwest of Bangalore to the region of Malavalli, where MPPL is located, to see how the project's going.

The tiny villages and shantytowns of Malavalli dot the lush farmland, which surrenders to the swell of granite hills in the water-rich region. Canals and rutted roads cut through a patchwork of small plots chockablock with sugar cane, rice, millet, peanuts and coconut palms. Women float in brightly colored saris along narrow mud paths to work in the rice paddies. Crews of landless laborers cut sugar cane with slick machetes while white cows decorated with tassels languorously heave wooden carts freighted with the stalks onto the road.

The village of Heggur is about 1.5 kilometers from the MPPL plant. On one of its dirt lanes I meet a woman I'll call Manini. As is true of most villagers, her family shares one room with a small alcove for a kitchen and has almost no furniture or indoor plumbing. That evening, as she builds the fire to cook dinner, the power goes out. The mother of two teenagers feels with her hands for a kerosene lamp fashioned from a glass flask and twine. The match pops when it lights and gulps brighter when it touches the wick. Manini resumes her work in the kitchen; the homemade lamp doesn't emit much light, but she knows where everything is; she's done this countless times before.

An offset effort is effective only if it's successfully followed through; trees can die or get cut down, or the projects may simply go unbuilt.

Her brother and some friends who have gathered after a day laboring in the fields tell me the electricity supply hasn't improved since MPPL came. They get at most twelve hours per day riddled with blackouts, pretty much what they had before. The villagers say that the Indian government installed transmission cables in the region in the 1970s, but the power supply has always been unpredictable. They also tell me (and I later confirm) that the energy produced at the plant isn't sent by special lines to nearby villages but instead goes right to the central grid, which feeds electricity-hungry Bangalore, a booming city of more than 5 million and India's information technology hub.

As for jobs, MPPL insists it runs a composting operation in Heggur, but no one I talk with knows of it, and I see no trace over the two days I'm there. A woman who runs various self-help groups in the Malavalli region and Manini, who is active in one such group, both say they've never heard of any bill collection or customer service jobs. In fact, household power bills are ascertained, issued by and paid directly to the state government, the same system they had before the biomass power plant arrived.

The jobs that *have* materialized are delivering fuel to the power station and at the plant itself. The biggest gains seem to be in hauling combustibles, according to private contractors who have expanded their businesses and hired scores, perhaps hundreds, of new laborers. At its facility, MPPL created fifty-six administrative positions—filled, according to everyone I meet

in the surrounding villages, by outsiders with more education. MPPL has hired local men for the gritty jobs in the boiler room. Workers at the plant say they take home about $2.50 a day, while management claims these unskilled laborers earn about $3 a day. By comparison, I'm told by villagers that men who work as field laborers earn $2 a day, and women are paid half that.

In Heggur I meet two men who work in the boiler room. They recount stories of dangerous labor conditions, including a lack of basic protective gear and no safety guards on fuel processing equipment. The workers pull branches and leaves from outside into the fire with their bare hands (few can afford gloves) and often suffer bites from the numerous snakes in the region, including cobras. The men tell me of a co-worker who died from a bite on the job. They also mention another co-worker, who lost a hand to the facility's giant wood chipper. As we talk about precautionary measures at the plant, one of the workers explains that basically there are none. "What goes on in the factory is a hush-hush thing," he says. "When Westerners come, you don't let them into the factory." Indeed, MPPL denied my request to see the power station.

Environmentally, the one indisputable success of the carbon-offset project is that it generates energy without burning fossil fuels. However, this has created a booming local market for combustibles. Consequently, whereas before families such as Manini's could gather dead cane leaves and branches free, now they must often buy wood. The effects on the poorest are substantial because they make many fires a day for cooking and washing. And with more people buying firewood, vendors are felling increasing numbers of trees to meet demand. What's more, one of Manini's friends tells me he cuts trees on his land to sell directly to the power station to earn extra money. He knows others who do the same. The people gathered at Manini's house attest that since MPPL arrived, they've seen an uptick in tree clearing.

I ask the head of MPPL, K. Krishan, about the discrepancy between what I found and the company's claims. He assures me MPPL "does not at all contribute to residents cutting down trees." Regarding worker safety, he claims the facility provides hard hats and goggles, which are required in the boiler feeding area. (Photos of the facility posted on Myclimate's website show laborers who do not wear hats or eye shields.) As for the rural distribution of electricity and the women's jobs described on its website, Krishan says these were part of a pilot project, active for less than a year between 2004 and '05, but the firm has been "remiss" in keeping its website current.

When I contact Gold Standard, the representative says what I found at MPPL was "alarming" and that "this project in particular has been subject to extensive reviews, research and monitoring both by the carbon community and independent groups." Despite how good they may sound on paper, in reality these projects inevitably entail complexities that arise *in situ*. These can range from lazy, incompetent or corrupt inspectors to opportunistic businesspeople like those running DESI and MPPL, both of which are certified to sell credits on the lucrative Kyoto-sanctioned carbon market. And like DESI, MPPL is expanding; it is building additional biomass plants using offset money based on the "success" of its Malavalli facility. Unexpected outcomes like the felling of trees for extra income and to make up for a shortage of wood for domestic consumption present other obstacles to a healthy climate. Maybe carbon offsetting—trying to stuff the global-warming genie back in the bottle—is a job that simply can't be done.

Building renewable energy systems needed to leapfrog dirty energy is a much larger and politically complex undertaking than CO_2 neutralization suggests. This transformation requires a far-reaching, well-funded program—something carbon offsetting can actually frustrate. The offset mechanism hinges on "additionality," meaning that a carbon-balancing project must not duplicate what would have otherwise happened. If the financing for, say, a biomass power plant was already lined up, or if the government required such a facility as part of its energy policy, then CO_2 money would be off limits. In reading MPPL's most recent validation form, I come across a line confirming the project's additionality: "It can also be concluded that there are no new policies or regulations, which would mandate the implementation of the project activity." In other words, keeping its energy system dirty allows India to boost the value of its carbon market. If the government mandates green energy, not only will it have to pay more for high-tech hardware, since fewer projects would be deemed additional but also the rich offset market would flee to competitors such as China. Indeed, a week after I went to Malavalli, the state of Karnataka announced the approval of two new 600-megawatt power stations that will run on fossil fuels.

In Bangalore I meet a man who owns a small solar-panel company. He tells me the city has the highest concentration of solar panels in India. Amid the city's birth as a tech haven over the past decade and a half, its population has mushroomed, stretching its power supply beyond the limit. In response, the city began encouraging residents to install solar water heaters. Almost everyone I meet in Bangalore has them; washing with water warmed by the sun has become a mundane part of life. These people have shifted to solar, but they didn't do it for carbon credits or with an eye on potential offset money. They heat their water with solar rays instead of fossil fuels because it delivers heat to the faucet, which alleviates demand for power. This initiative doesn't require wading into the morass of establishing additionality, no certification agent must be brought in, there is no abstract swapping of pollution for offset credits.

The problem isn't just that the offset mechanism lacks transparency and consistency; it's also that addressing those issues can easily distract from more meaningful solutions. Offsets are a way to make global warming fit the needs of the market instead of a way to truly solve climate change. They signal that it's OK to keep devouring energy even though we know it's not. What if we just cut emissions here in the West? What if we start figuring out how to consume less? And what if the West authentically supported developing countries in creating viable, integrated renewable energy networks instead of encouraging them to seek offset money? This direct approach would bring real development, not the market growth (even the "green" kind) that only continues fueling climate change. ■

Sapping the Superfund's Strength

As Washington dithers, sites slated for cleanup long ago continue to threaten human health.

by SHEILA KAPLAN AND MARILYN BERLIN SNELL

Miami, Oklahoma

If you head north on Route 66, past Kay's Kut & Kurl, the Okie Burger drive-in and the house where Mickey Mantle grew up, you come to a silvery, man-made mountain range. These are metal mountains, massive piles of sand mixed with arsenic, lead, cadmium and manganese tailings—toxic leftovers from more than 300 mines that once made this northeast corner of Oklahoma a series of boomtowns.

ED ABRAMS

From the turn of the century through the 1960s, miners dug in this area for lead, zinc and other raw materials, mostly used to make munitions for the military. When Eagle-Picher and most of the other mining companies shut down their sites by the mid-1970s, they didn't bother to clean up the toxic heaps, called chat. They abandoned the chat piles, some of which rose about 200 feet high and were as wide as two city blocks. The chat blew around Ottawa County, coating houses and yards with poisonous dust and saturating the air near schools and stores. Oblivious to any danger, parents helped themselves to the chat to fill sandboxes, and kids raced dirt bikes over the peaks.

The mining companies also neglected to seal most of the mine shafts. Over the next few years the shafts slowly filled with polluted, acidic water, which by 1979 burst into nearby Tar Creek, dyeing it Day-Glo orange and killing fish and other aquatic life. During frequent floods, the waters of Tar Creek would contaminate nearby neighborhoods, staining sidewalks and stones and leaving the soil unsafe for growing food—a particular problem for members of the Quapaw Indian Nation and other tribes accustomed to living off the land.

The sickly-looking river drew the attention of the EPA, which in 1983 designated Tar Creek an early and important target of Superfund, the landmark program enacted by Congress in 1980 to clean up the nation's worst toxic waste sites. But the EPA's roughly $120 million effort to remediate Tar Creek failed because of poor planning and complications from the underground network of tunnels and mines, and so people in the nearby towns of Picher, Cardin and Hockerville, as well as some farther away in Miami and Commerce and across the state line into Kansas, continued to be exposed.

In 1994 Rebecca Jim, a member of the Cherokee Nation who worked as a school counselor in Miami, read about the dangers of exposure to lead. She insisted that the government test some of the schoolchildren. The results were shocking: more than 43 percent of the kids had levels considered unsafe, capable of diminishing intelligence and causing other behavioral and physical problems. Jim was a driving force behind a massive education campaign that warned residents not to play in the chat, fish in the orange creek or eat food grown locally. Ten years later, the lead levels were much improved.

But that didn't mean the people were safe. Harvard public health professor David Bellinger and his colleagues found that children who had the highest levels of a mixture of arsenic and manganese, as measured in their hair, did worse on tests measuring verbal skills and verbal memory than kids who were less contaminated. These results led the National Institute of Environmental Health and Sciences to sponsor a second study by Bellinger, measuring more contaminants in the blood of Tar Creek community children and testing, among other things, whether exposure to chat has impaired their ability to think.

Bellinger, a lean, blue-eyed 53-year-old with graying hair and a close-cropped beard, is modest, despite his reputation as a brilliant researcher. He's gentle with the children and their worried parents—who leave the clinic with a $50 Wal-Mart gift certificate and a lot of unanswered questions. He became close to the test subjects after spending weeks in the community and wishes it wasn't going to take so long to get results. This study will continue for another five years, and others are under way. "There's a lot of smoke suggesting that we need to be concerned," Bellinger says.

The results of his team's work may be used to justify stricter protection standards for exposure to certain chemicals; could push the EPA to expedite efforts to clean up other Superfund sites; and will add to the growing body of science on what happens when people are exposed, not just to one pollutant but to mixtures—as typically occurs in real life. But these changes will come too late for the children and adults of Tar Creek. Unable to restore the land and water to a safe condition, the state in 2005 offered a buyout to families with children age 6 and younger. Then the EPA offered a second buyout, paying to relocate all those willing to leave—but leaving behind Quapaw tribe members, to whom abandoning the ancestral burial ground was unthinkable, and those who didn't qualify for any more land. Across the border in Kansas, the EPA is working on a buyout for the townspeople of Treece.

Tar Creek is just one of more than 1,200 seriously contaminated hazardous waste sites the EPA is charged with cleaning up under Superfund. But at thirty years old, the program is staggering under the weight of its enormous mandate. Underfunded

Sheila Kaplan is a fellow at The Nation Institute. Marilyn Berlin Snell is a San Francisco–based freelance journalist. *Support for this article was provided by the Investigative Fund of The Nation Institute. Former* Nation *intern Britt Harwood provided additional reporting.*

and at times badly managed, Superfund has been slow to start cleanups, sluggish to complete them and, in recent years, incapable of standing up to the Defense Department and others responsible for some of the worst pollution.

Today, Superfund's National Priorities List, which designates the worst hazards, includes sites that have been stuck on that roster for decades. Along New York's Hudson River, where General Electric dumped PCBs, serious setbacks in dredging the site to make it safe have been well documented. In Libby and Troy, Montana, so many people developed asbestos-related disease from a closed vermiculite mine that, earlier this year, the federal government declared a public health emergency. At Portland Harbor, in Oregon, Democratic Representative Earl Blumenauer says contamination from former shipbuilding is threatening the safety and health of those who live around the river. And across the country, communities are vying to get their waste dumps included on the priorities list.

By the EPA's count, one in four Americans lives within a few miles of a hazardous waste site. According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR), which Congress created to monitor the health of communities near Superfund sites, the waste dumps include a host of dangerous substances, among them lead, arsenic, manganese, mercury, vinyl chloride, benzene and PCBs. These chemicals are capable, in sufficient doses, of causing cancer or gene mutations, or altering the developing thyroid, endocrine and central nervous systems. Along with these known hazards is a fast-growing category called emerging contaminants—compounds whose toxic properties are only now being investigated.

Superfund's National Priorities List, which designates the worst hazards, includes sites that have been stuck on that roster for decades.

It is true that the EPA has cleaned up more than 300 sites. Elizabeth Southerland, Superfund's program director, says there are now only eighty-four priority list sites that pose an immediate and direct threat to human health. But Southerland's figure doesn't consider the number of Superfund sites that are leaking toxic chemicals into groundwater—which add more than 200. It also doesn't take into account the sites that the EPA staff are not adding to the priority list because they don't have the money to clean them up—a point noted in a recent report to Congress.

"I don't know that there is a legitimate reason for why they are still so slow, because some of those sites were listed in 1983 or '84," says Katherine Probst, a former EPA consultant and Superfund advisory board member. "That's a long time ago."

When Congress adopted Superfund—officially, the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act—it built in funding by placing taxes on crude oil and certain chemicals, along with a corporate environmental tax. This system was designed to arm the EPA with the resources necessary to investigate suspect sites and restore them in coordination with responsible parties or, failing that, to do the cleanup itself and later sue the responsible party to foot the bill—collecting up to triple damages. Historically, the majority of Superfund cleanups have been performed or paid for by the previous owners and operators of contaminated sites. Superfund taxes paid for the remaining 30 percent.

In 1995 these taxes expired. The trust, which in 1996 contained $3.8 billion, was empty by 2003. The value of the program's annual budget has declined 38 percent since 1980. A 2005 internal memo from the director of Superfund's Remediation and Technology Innovation Office acknowledged, "Over the past several years, demands on the Superfund budget have increased to the point where not all projects ready for construction in a given year can be funded." One group of EPA advisers, the National Risk-Based Priorities panel, meets twice a year to divvy up the pot. It's not easy. Meetings pit advocates for cleaning up places where young children are exposed to a carcinogen against sites where adults are exposed to something worse.

"I think the root cause of the problem is that the Superfund fee expired a long time ago," says one former Hill staffer who asked to remain anonymous. "And now, because EPA does not have the resources to make a credible threat that it's going to step in, clean up and charge treble costs, that makes it very difficult for the agency to do the kinds of investigations that force the cleanups." Litigation declined steeply under George W. Bush.

Although some of the blame can be placed on Bush—the only president who opposed the Superfund taxes—President Clinton was not much of an advocate for Superfund either. "In the president's budget, they always requested to reinstate the Superfund taxes when they expired, but it was not an issue that they went to the mat on," says Probst. "There's requesting—and there's going to the mat."

One recent boost for Superfund was the 2009 Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which targeted $600 million at fifty-one Superfund sites. The stimulus bill also deferred a requirement that states chip in toward the cleanup cost. "It's helping; it's a very positive factor," says Gary King, acting bureau chief for the Bureau of Land in Illinois. "They were able to get that money allocated quickly for projects."

It is not yet clear what direction the EPA will take under the Obama administration. The pace of cleanups has slowed. EPA spokespeople justify this in the same way they did under Bush, by saying those sites left on the list are more complex and costly to clean up than earlier sites. But critics don't buy it. Obama has also worried environmentalists with his appointment of Ignacia Moreno, former counsel to GE, as the top environmental lawyer to the Justice Department. One of GE's tactics was to challenge the constitutionality of Superfund. This is not Moreno's first pass through the revolving door. She worked in the Justice Department under President Clinton before going to GE, which has long fought the EPA over clean-

ing up the PCBs—as much as 1.3 million pounds—that the company spewed into the Hudson.

"The Obama administration has a brief window," says Probst. "This new administration has not been there very long, but what I said to EPA is, Time is running out.… One needs to say, Well, what is this administration going to do?"

Ed Hopkins, director of the Sierra Club's Environmental Quality Program, says Superfund has suffered from a lack of attention from the White House and Congress. "With healthcare, financial regulation and climate change consuming all the political system's energy, neither the administration nor Congress has done much to reauthorize Superfund's original funding mechanism," he says.

Obama's 2010 budget calls for the reinstatement of those taxes, and Representative Blumenauer has introduced a bill to do so. But if EPA administrator Lisa Jackson is going to strengthen the program, she'll have to do more than boost the budget. In a series of recent reports, both the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the EPA's inspector general noted that the agency has wasted some of its scarce resources. An IG report noted that in 2008 about $65 million in Superfund special accounts and $88 million in reserves could be freed up if more effective management was in place. Some lawmakers have vowed not to give Superfund extra money until the EPA can better explain where its current budget is going. Also, in recent months an EPA advisory committee has raised questions about the program's scientific standards and its failure to assess and monitor effectively the cumulative risks to the public posed by chemicals at Superfund sites.

Then there is the military. In March 2009 the GAO said nearly 1,000 former worksites of the military or its contractors require cleanup. In their typically understated language, the watchdogs wrote, "We continue to assert that EPA needs additional authority to ensure that cleanups are being done properly." (The Pentagon disagrees.) The reality is that the EPA could use its existing power to adopt more stringent standards for some of the chemicals that have leached from military sites, but it has caved in to Department of Defense opposition.

One important case in point is perchlorate, a chemical used by DoD, NASA and government contractors to make rocket fuel, flares and explosives, and that has been detected in thirty-five state water supplies. Perchlorate disrupts the thyroid hormone, which is important in regulating many body functions, among them neurological development. Kevin Mayer, an EPA site manager in San Francisco, says he's been worried about perchlorate pollution for a long time. The EPA has been sparring with DoD about the chemical for many years, and renewed its investigation into the chemical's safety in 2009.

"Throughout the cold war, a lot of chemicals were used and not handled the way we would handle them today," Mayer says. "Consequently, especially in our neck of the woods, if you've contaminated groundwater, you've contaminated major drinking water supplies." Mayer said DoD and NASA contractors found responsible for the contamination can charge the government for as much as 90 percent of cleanup costs. But to Mayer, it's worth the money.

"I continue to talk with people whose water supply has these chemicals in them," he says. "I think that my experience talking to a group of people, with a pregnant woman crying in front of me, gives me a little bit different point of view than scientists working in and around Washington, DC, with lobbyists screaming about how much it's going to cost them."

The former Hill staffer, who also worked on perchlorate, notes, "They would have adopted strict cleanup levels, but there was a lot of political pushback on multiple fronts, certainly from DoD." Will that change under Obama? "It remains to be seen. It would require a showdown. It hasn't happened at this point." There are 200 Navy sites that contain contaminated underwater sediments, according to Dogus Meric, a graduate student at Northeastern University who does government-sponsored Superfund research.

Another problem Obama has not yet taken on is the disarray at ATSDR, which conducts health assessments of Superfund sites and the communities that surround them. The EPA uses such assessments when making its priorities list. In March 2009 a report on ATSDR by the majority staff of the House Committee on Science and Technology's subcommittee on investigations and oversight noted that "independent scientists are often aghast at the lack of scientific rigor in its health consultations and assessments," and that its studies are so flawed they are "doomed from the start."

Superfund has been slow to start cleanups, sluggish to complete them and incapable of standing up to some of the worst polluters.

"Time and time again ATSDR appears to avoid clearly and directly confronting the most obvious toxic culprits that harm the health of local communities throughout the nation," the report said. "Instead, they deny, delay, minimize, trivialize or ignore legitimate concerns and health considerations of local communities and well respected scientists and medical professionals." In what may signal that Obama is starting to take these criticisms seriously, former director Dr. Howard Frumkin was recently demoted.

Another agency, the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, supports fourteen university programs that monitor the health of people who live at Superfund sites like Tar Creek. Dr. William Suk, who runs the program, says, "Superfund is essentially an end-of-the-pipeline mentality. We have sites that have been around for a long time that need to be cleaned up.… We're stuck with the ones we have. We have to clean them up. We have to make sure the populations are protected, and we have to launch new programs that would allow for there to be a much more interactive, integrated approach to ensuring what comes out of the pipeline is air and water." ■

Living at the 'Tip of the Spear'

The US military's plans would devastate Guam's environment. Its citizens are fighting back.

by KOOHAN PAIK

I was born in Pasadena in 1961 but raised in South Korea and other Pacific Rim locales, finally settling in Hawaii. During my coming-of-age years, between 1971 and 1982, my family lived on a beautiful small island in the western Pacific: lush jungles, remote waterfalls and mysterious freshwater caves. I remember riding horses through abandoned coconut groves and balmy nighttime spearfishing in some of the most abundant reefs in the world.

ED ABRAMS

That place was Guam, at the southern tip of the Northern Mariana Islands, a US colony. Many people think of Guam only as a giant military base, the nexus of US forward operations in the Pacific islands—"the tip of the spear," as the Pentagon calls it. That has certainly become its primary fate. The base occupies fully a third of the island and is off-limits to civilians, including the indigenous Chamorro people, who claim the oldest civilization in the Pacific. Even during my childhood, though I barely noticed it at the time, there was the constant background drone of B-52s roaring overhead to and from Vietnam, and submarines cruising the coasts. Such is the island's current trauma, after an agonized history that has included repeated invasions and four occupations of varying degrees of brutality over four centuries—by Spain, Japan and twice by the United States.

Despite these serial humiliations, the Chamorros—a unique mélange of Micronesian, Spanish and Asian bloodlines—have always maintained optimism, courage and a resilient sense of humor. So far, they have successfully navigated their delicate existence as traditional peoples on a Pacific island, while also trying to play supportive roles—as nonvoting "citizens" in a US colony, even patriotic active soldiers—for their current master. But now they're going to need all the resiliency they can muster to deal with the next blow the United States has in store.

I returned to Guam for a monthlong visit with old friends this past November. I was stunned to find the forests of my childhood being replaced by tarmac at an alarming rate; the remaining wild beaches and valleys being surveyed as potential live-fire shooting ranges; and an enormous, magnificently rich coral reef slated for dredging in order to build a port for the Navy's largest aircraft carrier. I witnessed the rage and hurt, exploding suddenly—and so unexpectedly—from the Chamorro people and other island residents, who have had no say in the planning of cataclysmic changes that will turn their homeland into an overcrowded waste dump for the creation of the hemisphere's pre-eminent military fortress. My friends told me it's all part of what's called the Guam Buildup.

Though technically Americans, people born in Guam have few American rights if they choose to live in their homeland. They can't vote for president; they have only one, nonvoting representative in Congress, and Congress can overturn any law passed by Guam's legislature. The island remains one of only sixteen UN-designated "non-self-governing territories"—in other words, colonies. As such, its people have no legal route to appeal any decisions made in Washington. A burgeoning resistance movement is under way, which the military is well aware of. They have hopes that a visit by President Obama, twice postponed and now set for June, will help ease the growing agitation. Given the mood of the people, I doubt Obama can calm anything.

The upcoming changes are all aimed at fulfilling a Pentagon vision set forth in its 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review. The "Guam Buildup [will] transform Guam," says the report, "the westernmost sovereign [*sic*] territory of the United States, into a hub for security activities in the region," intended to "deter and defeat" regional aggressors. Guam will be ground zero for mega-militarization in the Pacific and beyond. John Pike of Globalsecurity.org, a Washington-based think tank, hypothesizes that the military's goal is to be able "to run the planet from Guam and Diego Garcia [an Indian Ocean atoll owned by Britain] by 2015," "even if the entire Eastern Hemisphere has drop-kicked" the United States from every other base on their territory.

The swell of US military activity in the Pacific is not confined to Guam. All across the hemisphere, island communities are inflamed over a quiet, swift rearrangement and expansion of US bases throughout the Pacific—on Okinawa (Japan); on Jeju (a joint US–South Korea effort); on Tinian (in the same archipelago as Guam, but part of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands); on Kwajalein and the rest of Micronesia; and on the Hawaiian islands of Oahu, Big Island and Kauai. The US Pacific Command calls it an Integrated Global Presence and Basing Strategy. These imperial intentions have barely registered in the American media, despite gargantuan expenditures and plans. Nonetheless, this projection of American colonial assumptions and aggression is taking its toll throughout the Pacific Rim.

The centerpiece of the Guam Buildup is the transfer of about 8,600 marines from Okinawa. When you add their families and construction teams, including entire low-wage crews

Koohan Paik is a filmmaker and writer who lives in Kauai. She is the author, with Jerry Mander, of The Superferry Chronicles *(Koa Books).*

from the Philippines and Micronesia—there goes the "jobs bonanza" locals were promised—the expected influx will be 80,000 more people on Guam. The island, about half the size of Cape Cod, has a population of about 178,000. The people of Guam, whose largest ethnic group are Chamorro (37 percent of the population), followed by Filipino (25 percent) and then statesiders (10 percent), doubt their island has the carrying capacity to absorb a 50 percent population surge.

In November the Defense Department released a mandatory Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) assessing the buildup's effects. It elicited the most blistering responses ever to come from the Environmental Protection Agency, newly resuscitated after the Bush years. The EPA gave the DEIS its lowest possible ranking for proposing entirely ineffective mitigation actions. The agency further enumerated a litany of ecological catastrophes. Hundreds of acres of jungle and wetlands habitat will be covered with concrete and tract developments in order to house tens of thousands of newcomers. There will be massive raw-sewage spills and a shortage of drinking water. The Navy's plans include the destruction of seventy-one acres of an exquisitely healthy coral reef, home to at least 110 unique coral species, in order to build a berth for a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, which transports eighty-five fighter jets and 5,600 people.

Meanwhile, the Army wants to turn a pristine limestone forest that stretches from the hills to the sea—site of a prehistoric village that is listed with the National Registry of Historic Places—into a shooting range. In addition, it wants to build ammunition storage bunkers in wetlands areas. The Air Force hopes to build a missile defense shield, as well as hangars, airstrips and helicopter pads, turning Guam into the planet's premier parking lot for billion-dollar fighter jets, helicopters and drones.

The DEIS provided no adequate alternative actions to any of these problems. Nor did it mention that dredging the reef will dislodge radioactive sediment that accumulated during the 1960s and '70s when ships traveling from atomic test sites in the Marshall Islands came to Guam to be washed down at Apra Harbor.

The DEIS was written as if Guam's people, land and culture counted for nothing. The vice speaker of the Guam legislature, Benjamin Cruz, charged that the "problem you had with the original DEIS is that it was done virtually." Cruz pointed out that the report, prepared at a staggering cost of $87 million, was written by consultants who had never been to Guam and who had simply cobbled together the 11,000-page document based on Internet research and phone calls to Guam government agencies.

The EPA's excoriating response to the DEIS has prompted lawmakers to question not only the cost of the buildup but also the costs of mitigating the project's environmental, social and cultural impacts. The governor of Guam estimates that $3 billion will be needed to upgrade infrastructure before any military construction begins. Military construction is already priced at more than $10 billion, assuming that Japan fulfills its promise to kick in $6 billion to help remove US troops from Okinawa. If Japan begs off, the price tag for US taxpayers will soar to more than $13 billion. Surprisingly, Republican Senator Kay Bailey Hutchinson of Texas sharply criticized Pentagon officials at a Senate appropriations hearing in March about the unexpected exorbitant costs of current Asia-Pacific basing strategies. She suggested that the best solution might be permanent bases on the US mainland, "where you don't have training constraints and you don't have urban buildup, and it is a more stable environment for our families."

By contrast, Democratic Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, who has advocated for an increased military presence in the Marianas since the 1970s, is intent on seeing the buildup through. He supports two solutions: pouring billions into massive infrastructure development (highways, waste facilities, power plants, etc.) and moving all the live-fire training to the gemlike island of nearby Tinian. However, many Guam residents feel that infrastructure spending misses the true cultural and environmental dangers of the population spike; and on Tinian, local farmers, who would be forced off their land (à la Bikini Atoll, circa 1946), are aghast that live-fire training would mark the end of agrarian culture there.

The EPA gave the military's Draft Environmental Impact Statement its lowest ranking, enumerating a litany of ecological catastrophes.

The incident that set these plans for the Guam Buildup in motion was the 1995 gang-rape of a 12-year-old girl by US marines stationed at the Futenma Air Base in Okinawa, one of several shocking incidents involving assaults on local girls by marines. Outraged residents pressured the conservative government to reduce or eliminate the American military presence in Japan. Protests culminated in a 2006 realignment agreement between Japan and the Bush administration to close the air base and send half of its troops to a new air base on Henoko Bay, on Okinawa's east coast, with the other half going to Guam by 2014.

But fierce resistance in Okinawa has derailed the move. Japan's new prime minister, Yukio Hatoyama, who was swept into power in September on his promise to reduce the number of US troops, caught military planners off guard by refusing to allow base construction at Henoko. In October, Hatoyama incensed Defense Secretary Robert Gates by putting the Marines' move on hold until he determines an alternative to the Henoko site. The relocation of Futenma remains stalemated.

The people of Guam have never before opposed military plans for their island. In fact, the Chamorros and Filipinos from Guam are arguably the most patriotic people in the nation; more soldiers from the Marianas have fought and died in American wars since 1950, per capita, than those from any other region in the country. However, the sheer magnitude of destruction proposed by the Guam Buildup is unprecedented and has pushed these patriots to their limit. For the first time in the island's history, they are uncharacteristically speaking

out against the military. At a recent public hearing, Chamorro veteran soldier Janet Aguon, who fought in two wars, said, "I'm truly sick and tired of the United States of America and the Department of Defense treating the people of Guam as if they were trash. So my message to President Obama, the DoD, the secretary of the Navy: take the military and put them in your own country and not on our tiny little island."

Military planners are worried. The Hawaii-based commander of Marine forces in the Pacific, Lt. Gen. Keith Stalder, told the *Washington Post* in March, "I see a rising level of concern about how we are going to manage this."

Meanwhile, demilitarization activists have begun networking. The goal: *a Pacific for the people*. Those from Guam are allying themselves not only with those from Tinian and other Mariana Islands but also with all their Pacific Rim cousins, particularly on Okinawa, in Hawaii and on Jeju Island. These three locations, with Guam, will be sites for the nation's most advanced missile technology—the ultimate geopolitical "Kick Me" sign. As an example of this pan-Pacific concordance, retired Col. Ann Wright recently joined Pacific Islanders outside the gates of Pacific Command Headquarters on Oahu to protest the Guam Buildup.

"We want Admiral Willard [head of the Pacific Command] to hear this: No means No!" said Wright. "When you force yourself on someone against their will, it's called rape—rape of the people, the culture and the land. We Americans must stop our government's military expansion in the Pacific."

Carmen Artero Kasperbauer, a Chamorro elder whose family's land is now part of an air base, told the military daily *Stars and Stripes*, "We hate being possessions to the federal government. That's why people are angry." But Kasperbauer, like most Chamorros, doesn't direct her anger at the troops. "I'm not talking about the uniformed military. We love the uniformed military. Our son…helped liberate the Kuwaitis. But he can't help liberate me."

Increasingly, Guam residents are discussing the urgency of political self-determination. "We're being moved back and forth across a chessboard by two countries: one that once occupied us [Japan] and one that currently does," pointed out university instructor Desiree Ventura, author of the popular blog The Drowning Mermaid. Clearly, the need for sovereignty is more dire than ever, exposing the real question at hand: is President Obama ready to release Guam's people from their colonized status? ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

that everyone has the right to be considered innocent until proven guilty; we also believe that using guilt by association to blacklist someone is shameful. Without those two principles the concept of human rights becomes a travesty, regardless of how many famous people sign petitions.

Amnesty has not got "into bed" with Cageprisoners. Giving Begg a platform from which to speak on Guantánamo does not prevent the organization from campaigning against the abuse of women (or men) by the Taliban and other Islamic regimes. Both the hare and the hounds (if that's what they are) have rights that need defending.

There is certainly a serious conversation to be had about women and fundamentalism, religion and human rights, and the integration of Europe's 20 million Muslims. An ad hominem attack on a former Guantánamo detainee is not the way to launch it; righteous indignation, however satisfying, is not conducive to clear thought or dialogue.
D.D. Guttenplan & Maria Margaronis

Nix Next Texas Texts

Dallas
Re Eric Foner's "Twisting History in Texas" [April 5]: Governor Rick Perry argues that only Texans should decide what children here learn. Yep, we Texans are doing just fine with no outside help. Why, almost half our students graduate from high school! Our state board of ed is making sure our youngsters don't learn about Thurgood Marshall or Cesar Chavez but do learn about Phyllis Schlafly, the NRA and the Moral Majority. Thank God the board also voted to require a more positive portrayal of Joseph McCarthy's crusade against Godless Communists. I understand the governor, if the Lord blesses his re-election, is preparing a Bible study course on Jesus' support of the death penalty. That man will go to the ends of the flat earth to educate our kids.
John Fullinwider
Dallas Teacher of the Year, 1997-98

Henderson, Nev.
Does anyone have an estimate on the cost to build a wall around Texas?
Tom Walker

Austin, Tex.
Complaining about the backwardness of the state that gave America Barbara Jordan, Molly Ivins and LBJ is tempting, but it's more useful to participate in the electoral process. In 2008 most of the board's worst incumbents had no opponents. The extremists control the board because they always run, always get out the vote and always fund their candidates.

Fixing the Texas Board of Education just requires some effort and money. If Rebecca Bell-Metereau (voterebecca.com) and Judy Jennings (votejudyjennings.com) win election, the anti-education faction will be in a minority on the board. The districts are huge and gerrymandered, but they are winnable.
Victor Yodaiken

San Marcos, Tex.
I am running for the Texas State Board of Education, in District 5. All of us must view our public education system as a treasure we must guard and nurture carefully, whether or not we have children in public school. My husband and I sent our two daughters to public school, and we volunteered our time to help improve the quality of education for our daughters and for other people's children as well.

I teach at a public university, and I have witnessed the recent deterioration of my students' preparedness for higher education. They have suffered under a relentless regime of preparing for tests, meanwhile failing to develop critical or creative thinking skills. The Texas Board of Education can turn this trend around if we elect reasonable people in Districts 3, 5 and 10. Texas textbooks' influence is huge. The curriculum and books in Texas must provide the best education we can offer in the twenty-first century.
Rebecca Bell-Metereau

Books & the Arts.

Extravagant Disorder

by JANA PRIKRYL

How often, in these foxed old photographs, the women are taken from behind. Speckled with bromine, curling with age, gnawed by rats in the photographer's crumbling house, the women in these images have been palpably misused. Made by Miroslav Tichy and on view at the International Center of Photography (ICP) in New York City (through May 9), the snapshots chronicle the comings and goings of women in the Moravian village of Kyjov between the 1960s and 1980s. Here a blonde struts away from the photographer, her right buttock outlined mercilessly by the fabric of her skirt; there another woman, older and nattier in a flower-print dress, presents an ample derrière as she bends to buckle the strap of her sandal; elsewhere a headless figure in nothing but a white bra and panties is caught sunbathing, the hillocks of her backside captured in uncharacteristically sharp focus. To offer such descriptions, giving a cursory account of a dizzying abundance of only half the population, might suggest that Tichy's work was no more than a lost man's hang-up. Yet the subject matter of his images is inseparable from both their history and their ambiguously aesthetic states of decay. They are just as much nonencounters with women—most of whom were not aware that a picture was being taken—as they are encounters with photography.

The way a photograph lops off a slice of reality, severing it from the narrative flow of time, is a seductive thing: it acts like a little hammer to the reflex in our brain that wants to tell stories. Tichy (pronounced TEE-chee, the "ch" as in "chutzpah") stimulates this node with extra vigor because his photographs are not just frozen in time; it seems truer to say that they were frozen once but are now sluggishly thawing. Tichy took them haphazardly, out of focus, with cameras he'd made from scratch using shoeboxes and cardboard rolls and plexiglass (polished with toothpaste and ashes). The prints are over- or underexposed, crookedly cropped, scratched, torn, penciled over, left to rot or be nibbled by rodents, often as if by accident; indeed, the pictures are saturated with accidental effects until the idea of artistic intent itself becomes blurry. John Berger once wrote that "photographs bear witness to a human choice being exercised in a given situation." Tichy's work bears witness to a skepticism about "human choice" so profound that its abdications seem to come full circle: they force us to think about who or what was responsible for these undeniably evocative pictures, and even to ask (if only rhetorically) whether their flaws were calculated to seed each image with a certain nostalgia value.

Tichy started taking pictures in the 1950s, but it wasn't until decades later that Roman Buxbaum, a former neighbor who as a child had been fond of him, returned to Kyjov and decided to gather his work. This late harvest resulted in a solo show at the Seville Biennial in 2004, which led to Tichy's receiving the 2005 Discovery Award from the prestigious Rencontres d'Arles photography

Untitled, by Miroslav Tichy

© TICHY OCEAN FOUNDATION, ZURICH

Jana Prikryl is on the editorial staff of the New York Review of Books.

festival, followed by shows in Zurich, Frankfurt, London, Paris and now the ICP. These tributes have only heightened the residue of poignancy that clings to his photographs. Looking at them, you think about how Czech history intersected with Tichy's life and the lives of his subjects: the women we see were followed around town not just by the local derelict with a duct-taped camera but also, quite likely, by state agents with secret shutters in their pockets. Despite Tichy's sublime indifference to politics, his work cannot but bear witness to a long moment after the Prague Spring when the country's books and movies seemed to oscillate between restrictiveness and wild bursts of freedom. In Tichy's universe, it's as if liberty could be expressed only in the actions of a libertine.

He was born in 1926, the son of a tailor whose shop occupied a front room of the family house, where Tichy lives today. At the age of 18 he moved to Prague and enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts. He seemed on the path to becoming an esteemed Czech painter; based on a few thumbnails included in *Miroslav Tichy*, the ICP catalog, his work was reminiscent of the painter Josef Capek. Then the Communist Party seized control of the government in 1948. Social realism quickly became the official aesthetic at the academy, and, as Tichy explains in *Tarzan Retired* (2004), a documentary made by Buxbaum and on view at the ICP, the school abandoned its core curriculum of figure classes using nude models. When that happened, Tichy says, he dropped out.

The flavor of his genuinely Franciscan personality—detached from all such follies of man but without a hint of bitterness; indeed, with a great jolly amusement—emerges when he recalls returning to the school sometime later and asking why one model standing before a class had his arm raised for no evident reason. Apparently the man was holding up a hammer. Tichy saw no hammer. "We couldn't get one in such a hurry," he was told, "so the students have to paint it from memory. As soon as we find one, he'll be holding it." As he tells this story—which, after all, is symptomatic of everything about Communist rule that helped sink his hopes for a serious career—the toothless, penniless old man breaks into hysterics. For him the tragedy of history was farcical the first time around.

After leaving the Academy of Fine Arts and serving two years of mandatory military service, Tichy returned not to Prague but to the sleepy town of Kyjov and his childhood abode. He continued to paint, using a neighbor's attic as his studio, and in 1956 he took part in a group show of artists whose work was not deemed "official," presented at the Kyjov hospital. The following year Tichy was poised to exhibit his paintings in another relatively subversive group show—in the capital, where it would be harder to avoid drawing the attention of the authorities. On the eve of the exhibition he withdrew his paintings and suffered "an acute psychotic breakdown," Buxbaum writes in the ICP catalog. Tichy believed that his fellow artists were "part of a fascist conspiracy." He was kept at a clinic for more than a year before being deposited back at his parents' house.

© ROMAN BUXBAUM

Miroslav Tichy (1987), by Roman Buxbaum

Around this time he became certifiably eccentric, and his abnormality, anticipating in reverse the period of Czech "normalization" following the Prague Spring, manifested itself in a few ways. He was certainly a confirmed dropout and recluse. He stopped changing his clothes and mended his coat with wire until it acquired the worm-eaten texture of something out of a Tim Burton movie. In Buxbaum's documentary Tichy leads the viewer on a tour of his house, explaining how he shares his food (a bag of flour and two potatoes) with a family of rats. These habits alone would have been enough to make his life difficult in Communist Czechoslovakia: not only was his appearance a rebuke to the rather conservative socialist ideal of the clean, honest worker but his habits seemed to advertise a radical independence. Barely eating, barely washing, making whatever he needed, going nowhere he couldn't walk—he simply declined to participate in any exchange that would link him to society. Before every May Day parade, the police would lock him up in an asylum so that the sight of him wouldn't embarrass party officials passing through town; early on, before she died, his mother always packed him a little suitcase for this annual excursion. In the early '60s Tichy also started wandering around Kyjov, out by 6 most mornings, pointing a homemade camera at women.

If we disregard the few remarks about his original intentions that Tichy made some forty years after the fact—most of which are self-deprecating and puncture meaningfulness whenever it seems to bubble up—his work routine appears remarkably disciplined, even rigorous, and indifferent to the claims of his subjects. Buxbaum explains how he took the photographs: he usually kept the camera in his pocket or under his coat when pressing the shutter and rarely framed a shot through the viewfinder. Most people in Kyjov assumed that such a character would lack the wherewithal to assemble functioning devices or to load them with film. In fact, he took three rolls daily, just over ninety exposures. (That's more than 30,000 potential images a year, amounting to half a million over the years he was active—which puts into perspective the fact that about 6,000 photographs have survived, of which just about a hundred are on view at the ICP.) At night he would run the film through a jerry-built enlarger, developing only what looked "similar to the world." In the documentary, Buxbaum is intrigued by this phrase of Tichy's and asks him to elaborate; his offhand reply deflates the moment, indicating that he simply developed anything that was halfway recognizable.

The pictures that resulted from his slapdash technique contain a surprising variety of moods and styles and, ultimately, human personalities. There are the "bathing beauties," bikini-clad women photographed around the public pool. (In this black-and-white world we see proof of Shakespeare's Bohemia, the one that was surrounded by shores.) There are

more abstract, Modernist pictures of cropped body parts, gestures islanded from their context. There are blurrier-than-most images of women standing or walking on the street. A few rare shots record glances cast directly at the photographer—the women generally not looking pleased. They seem to have had a hunch about where they stood in this transaction. "To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed," Susan Sontag wrote. "It means putting oneself into a certain relation to the world that feels like knowledge—and, therefore, like power." This dynamic may explain why backsides so predominate in Tichy's *oeuvre*: besides having a clear preference for the angle, he probably found it easier to photograph women when they weren't facing him. Several of the frontal photos are redolent of porn, showing well-endowed women topless, in close-up, or women posed provocatively but at a remove, on TV screens or magazine covers. And there are a handful of landscapes, most of them grainy and immediate enough to invoke the earliest years of photography but not sufficiently radiant or evocative of elegant repose to earn the comparisons to Josef Sudek that are made in the catalog and documentary.

In other words, nearly all of Tichy's photographs bypass what has been, from the medium's first decades, central to its nature: a moment of recognition. We generally expect photographs of people to record a glance, however fleeting, between the person behind the camera and whoever is in front of it; in a random lineup of major twentieth-century photographs, you could probably identify who took many of them by the expressions on their subjects' faces. August Sander, Diane Arbus, Richard Avedon: their subjects became characters in the photographers' vision of how the world looked. The exceptions to this trend—Walker Evans's surreptitious photographs taken on the New York City subway; Paul Strand's famous portrait of a blind woman, which he claimed was his solution to the problem of finding subjects who wouldn't know he was taking their picture—only reinforce its traditional authority. Instead of embracing a documentary ideal, however, Tichy cultivated a carelessness that resulted in almost pictorial effects. His difference, in these respects, is part of what makes his work look fresh and strange despite its being roughly contemporary with, say, Arbus. In most of his photographs, it's the absence of exchange that grants the subjects distinction and dignity—an autonomy that, by the same stroke, Tichy denies by taking their picture without their consent.

If you orbit slowly the ground floor of

BOOK NOW!
September 26 to October 3, 2010, departing from New York City
Victor Navasky and Katrina vanden Heuvel invite you to join them on The Nation Magazine's 13th annual seminar cruise to Bermuda.
Jeremy Scahill
Jim Hightower
Christopher Hayes
Special guests include
Judy Collins
Special musical guest and author
Melissa Harris-Lacewell
Nation Columnist and MSNBC Contributor
Jessica Valenti
Founder of Feministing.com
John Nichols
The Nation's Washington Correspondent
Calvin Trillin
The Nation's Deadline Poet
For more information, visit www.nationcruise.com or call 800-707-1634
THE Nation. Cruise

the ICP, scanning Tichy's images along the outside wall of the large, flood-lit cube, one of the things you may feel is uncomfortable. My first impression drew me up short: these were the trophies of a hunter, and by looking at them I became complicit in his chronic trespasses against the women of Kyjov! Perhaps I felt especially protective of the ladies because I knew that, even without the nuisance of this amateur photographer, they already had to dodge the various aggressions of the state—which inevitably took the form of aggression among private citizens. In a world where advantages large (jumping the wait list for a Skoda car) and small (first dibs on rare items like chic winter coats) were greased with bribes and mutual favors, the ordinary act of looking at other people became laced with appraisal. You wanted to avoid being looked at too much because looks could invite talk, and talk could lead to a phone call curbing your conspicuous advantages. It's a nice irony, then, that Tichy's photographs evoke this all-pervasive fug of alienation—in his case between photographer and subject—even as his methods must have added to tensions that the women in Kyjov experienced daily.

Much as I wanted to, I did not feel an equal welling of sympathy when looking at the state-hounded and truly endangered targets featured in *Prague Through the Lens of the Secret Police*, a recent collection of surveillance photographs taken between 1969 and 1989 and published, unfortunately, in a bewildering edition by the Institute for the Study of Totalitarian Regimes, in Prague. These images have an undeniable weightiness, or carry at least a freight of curiosity. We see Timothy Garton Ash taking long strides in a trench coat in Prague in April 1985; a year later, in an article on Czechoslovakia, Garton Ash mentioned trying to avoid the StB, or the secret police, when going to meet Vaclav Havel. Was that trek the 35-millimeter moment? But the subjects of these photographs usually knew that, unjust as it was, their sympathies or actions were provoking the worst abuses of the state: they were consciously engaged in a war of wits and nerve. The stalking wasn't personal. Granting that very often Eastern bloc snitches were motivated by envy or greed, those interesting emotions leave no mark on the dead, dry spy photos.

By contrast, Tichy's body of furtive photographs commemorates a lifetime of intrusions that were, as a woman would say, uncalled for. Yet looking at the photographs one by one, an odd inversion emerges: the few shots in which the subject acknowledges the photographer with no hint of ambivalence—a handful of women by the pool are captured flirting with Tichy, one even standing proudly in a beauty-pageant pose—convey the least about her as a person. As I looked more closely and more slowly at each image at the ICP, a line of Rilke's popped into my head: "And it is in overstepping that he obeys." It's where the women are taken unawares, the particulars of their location and even their faces blurred, that their inwardness is best preserved and some kind of essence shines through. The miracle of Tichy's arm's-length method is that personalities do leave an imprint. Yes, heads are cut off and certain body parts are relentlessly "captured" (in her catalog essay Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev astutely observes that these synecdoches "point to an infant's fragmented view of the female body"), but the photographs don't melt into a generic view of Woman: each figure is unique and pregnant with her own idiosyncrasies.

Related to the tactile quality of Tichy's various methods of doctoring the photos are the "frames" he placed around some of them. About a quarter of the shots at the ICP are matted with cardboard imitations of picture frames, on which zigzags and curlicues drawn with brushes, pens and pastels seem to work like quotation marks, playfully teasing out a pattern within the photograph, or declaring that here is the haughty grandeur of art, or suggesting something less ironic—the simple exuberance of "I made this!" Often there is a mysterious visual logic between the frames' colors and textures and the images they contain, akin to the intuitive coherence of Rauschenberg's combines. It's easy to dismiss Tichy's faux picture frames, but to me they seem like signs of the work's private value to him, of his solitary dialogue with it, perhaps not intended for exposure to the gaze of strangers in foreign museums. Insofar as personal snapshots react differently to transplantation from private to public soil, Tichy's frames are meaningful roots.

The isolation of the artist with his work is, oddly enough, one of the things that connects Tichy to his time and place. "I am both artist and audience," says Bohumil Hrabal's main character, Hanta, in the novel *Too Loud a Solitude* (1976). What happens when an artist is forced to occupy those two positions at once? Much "unofficial" art from the Eastern bloc engaged with this problem, some works more adroitly than others. Quite often, it appears, the impulse to outrun formal structures that seemed dictated by the state propelled the artist into the arms of contingency, chance and some form of unrestrained appetite—some extravagance of gluttony or disorder. (Vera Chytilova's 1966 film *Daisies*—in which two willful, succulent lasses mow a path through society and eventually through linear narrative—can be read, among other things, as an allegory of this trend.)

If the disheveled aesthetic had a spokesman, it might be Hrabal's Hanta, a morally revealing and hilarious outcast who operates a trash compactor. He designs each bale of garbage with loving care, savoring his choice of the books and prints that will be smashed and sent off to oblivion. Notably, his commitment to witnessing the destruction of his culture comes to shape him, too: "I have to go easy on the hygiene, working with my bare hands: I can't wash them until night, because if I washed them several times a day my skin would crack. But sometimes, when a yearning for the Greek ideal of beauty comes over me, I'll wash one of my feet or maybe even my neck, then the next week I'll wash the other foot and an arm."

In the end *Too Loud a Solitude* reveals itself to be a romantic work: the socialist state finally fulfills its promise, and Hanta's primitive compactor is replaced by a gleaming new factory that makes him, and his self-defeating art, redundant. But in real life Hanta's unkempt counterparts weren't granted such a magnificent exit. It turns out that Tichy's photographic methods were not altogether unique behind the Iron Curtain: there were pockets of movements in Hungary and East Germany that deliberately used

Get Out

Can you feel your confidence
match the billowing crowd?
You even feel cocky, believing

you've earned the admiration of a few.
It is, in fact, what it appears to be:
a voice fastened to paper very carefully,

a cry cut from its mouth.
But then, you think, who is that
you're talking to? There's no one here,

just paper and ink and you.
What is this pathetic game?
Get out. Go find a friend.

CRAIG MORGAN TEICHER

cheap equipment and took casual snapshots in an effort to produce something "genuine" in the face of a false socialist reality. A round-up of Eastern bloc photography, shown at MIT in 1987, quoted a Czech photographer named Milan Knizak, who said of his working habits: "From time to time I pressed the button.... I didn't use the automatic, I didn't focus the picture, etc.... Some parts came out clean, some not. As in life." The handful of his photographs reproduced in the catalog *Out of Eastern Europe: Private Photography* look merely accidental and discomposed. They have none of the movement and suppleness of Tichy's images.

Given this specific historical context, it's unfortunate that the ICP's presentation simplifies Tichy's work and barely addresses his ambivalent position as both victim and encroacher. The curators want to have it both ways: apparently his lifestyle represented a brave stand against socialism's conformity and his methods of taking covert photographs parodied state surveillance practices, yet the images are straightforward celebrations of uncomplicated village life. According to a wall plaque at the ICP, Tichy was a garden-variety street photographer who sought to capture daily life in public spaces: "The everydayness of Tichy's photographs typifies what French novelist Georges Perec called the 'infra-ordinary' (as distinguished from the 'extra-ordinary'), and defined as that which passes when nothing passes."

This simultaneous sanitizing and overstating does no service to the complexity of Tichy's project: to Tichy every photograph was an event, a point of contact with a world he had renounced, whether for reasons of ethical purity or psychological difficulty. In this sense his method truly turns Berger's definition of photography on its head: rather than caring about the precise decisions that went into the making of each shot, Tichy cared about the total experience: the confluence of a woman on the street, his seeing her and perhaps by chance imprinting her on his roll of film. If all those things *happened*—and two out of three were beyond his control—then he had a picture. Another wall plaque calls the photographs "artifacts of a deliberately abusive production process in which injury and distress are not only allowed but considered philosophically." This observation is closer to the mark but still arid and clinical. For the ICP to hope that viewers just wouldn't notice the serialized sexual content of these images suggests how powerfully discomfiting it is. Once you look it in the eye, the subject could run away with you. ■

A Reign Not of This World

by JONATHAN BLITZER

"I am animated by the idea that you can stop reading me when you wish," explains Juan María Brausen in *A Brief Life*, a 1950 novel by Juan Carlos Onetti. Brausen's remark appears in a letter to a friend: Brausen has recently left town, and he doesn't want his friend to follow him. Reading Onetti's fiction, you can't help feeling superfluous yourself, encouraged to slink away, to give up the pursuit. It's nothing personal. As the protagonist of Onetti's novella *The Pit* (1939) says of his writing, more with indifference than piquancy, "I don't know whether it's interesting but that doesn't bother me." Onetti's characters need to be alone, and whether they are writers or not, they take especial pains to harvest their solitude. In this they resemble their author, who was never quite reclusive but rather willfully self-contained. His fiction appears, maybe more than for most writers, to have been a necessary, perhaps even hermetic, personal instrument; writing only for his characters, as he once professed, he could contain and give shape to the self so that he might, momentarily, forget that he existed. "My oeuvre," Onetti wrote to Octavio Paz in the frosty and uncharacteristically public exchange that ensued after Paz was awarded the prestigious Premio Cervantes in 1981, "is nothing more than a combination of fictional works in which the only thing that mattered to me was my own self, confronting and maybe conjoined with the perspectives of many characters that life has forced on me or that I have perhaps imagined." Onetti immerses himself in reality just long enough to fashion an escape. This is his peculiar gift.

Words appear in odd and unlikely combinations with Onetti, always courting possibilities while reducing certainty. His fictions and correspondence attest to his insurmountable remoteness. In interviews he was much the same, speaking slowly, punctuating remarks with long pauses, taking interminable drags on a cigarette in midsentence, trailing off in a bemused monotone. As the Spanish novelist Antonio Muñoz Molina once said, recalling a 1977 televised interview with the writer in Madrid, where Onetti lived for nineteen years in political, then self-imposed, exile: "I had never heard anyone speak about literature with such a lack of emphasis."

Juan Carlos Onetti

Born in 1909 in Montevideo, Uruguay, Onetti was one of the most idiosyncratic and virtuosic Latin American writers of the twentieth century. His readers in Spanish know this. In his later decades, after years of writing in relative obscurity, he earned a reputation as a quirky, cosmopolitan Modernist—a South American Faulkner who also enjoyed an aesthetic kinship with Borges and Céline (an unlikely pairing that only Onetti could provoke). In 1980 Onetti won the Premio Cervantes. He also became known as a writer's writer. Mario Vargas Llosa, Roberto Bolaño, Juan Rulfo, Julio Cortázar and Antonio Muñoz Molina are among his admirers, all of them better-known (and very different) masters who have acknowledged, always in intensely personal terms, the debt they owe Onetti. Bolaño, who attempted to interview Onetti in Mexico in 1975, once joked that he was himself a terrible writer by comparison. Vargas Llosa, for his part, said no other modern writer has grasped the human need for fiction "with more force or originality" than Onetti.

Onetti's treatment—and recognition—in the English-speaking world is slight. What exists is the vague impression, fainter than a watermark, left by the writer and his enthusiasts: sporadic and somewhat

Jonathan Blitzer is a freelance writer and translator living in New York City.

haphazard translations of his novels and stories, some mild academic interest in his fiction and a crumb trail of biographical sketches or commentary. (All but two of his eleven novels have been translated into English, though only a single and regrettably abridged volume of his short stories exists in English; his two books of critical and journalistic writings remain untranslated.) During 2009, the year of his centenary, there was, predictably, a flurry of articles, readings and international tributes in the Spanish literary world (including a well-attended conference in Madrid headlined by Muñoz Molina and Vargas Llosa). But there wasn't a word in the English-language press. This silence was all the more conspicuous alongside the persistent din about Bolaño. The scant attention may have had to do with the fact that most of Onetti's work was translated in the 1990s, more than a decade after he received the Premio Cervantes and around the time of his death, in 1994. Whatever the case, Onetti in translation remains distant from his readers, a perversely fitting situation given the peculiarities of his work and its marginal place in literary accounts of Latin American fiction in English. But that's no reason the distance should remain so great.

Onetti's characters retreat from the world into the half-truths of memories dissolved in dreams.

The Pit is a microcosm of Onetti's future work, in terms of both substance and reception. It is, in essence, the disjointed rant of a shattered recluse, a drama entirely without action or sustained description; it is a self-portrait conceived and sketched by Eladio Linacero, the novella's only character, though he finds companionship in the imagined company of a girl from his childhood, two whores, a writer acquaintance and a communist roommate who never actually appears or has occasion to speak. On the eve of his fortieth birthday Linacero has decided to write the story of his life—at 40 everyone should do so, he reflects. But like the typical Onetti character, Linacero sidles up to the world of memory only to shrink away from it and instead narrate the half-truths of memories dissolved in dreams.

When the 30-year-old Onetti completed *The Pit*, Carlos Quijano, founder of the Montevideo-based magazine *Marcha* (where Onetti worked as an editor), was incredulous that Onetti planned to publish it. As it turned out, Onetti published *The Pit* himself after it was rejected by the distinguished Argentine literary magazine *Sur*; the novel had an initial print run of 500 copies, most of which went unsold. The episode would presage many more years of obscurity for Onetti, as well as a long history of rejections and second-place finishes in literary contests, a litany of near misses. Cobbling together his life from some of the better accounts, I counted seven or eight consecutive honorable mentions and partial recognitions, beginning with *The Pit*, all without a single definitive win. (With his usual fumbling charm, Onetti called himself *un permanente segundón* in his acceptance speech for the Premio Cervantes.) Onetti elevates obscurity into a kind of art form, perhaps because he has his characters share in it; slightness and bemusement—being absent or elsewhere—are the twin motifs of his life and fiction. What Onetti lacked in discipline in his writing, publishing sporadically and sometimes going for long stretches without writing, his characters more than match in the ferocity of their inaction.

The reek of malaise and the bitter unease of passive aggression are not unique to *The Pit*. The narrator of the short story "Bienvenido, Bob" says of a younger man, the titular Bob, whom he has always envied, "Nobody has ever loved a woman as much as I love his ruin, the unmistakable fact that he is stuck in the filthy life of men." In his early stories and novels, this jaded tone predominates. When Linacero's resentments bubble articulately to the surface, for instance, he spews pure invective. ("If you marry a girl and one day wake up next to a woman, it's possible you'll understand, without being disgusted, the hearts of men who rape girls and the slobbering affections of old men hovering on street-corners outside schools, chocolates in hand.") In Onetti's work from the 1950s onward, the tone grows somewhat more tempered and less bracing and rhetorical, and capable of conveying an ambient gloom. Still, an incessant, pulsating self-consciousness remains. In *A Brief Life* (1950), Brausen eyes himself with Samsa-like suspicion, contemplating "this person, me in the taxicab, nonexistent, a mere incarnation of the idea of [my name]." The sharpness of tone, the existential unease, the throbbing restlessness—nothing quite of this sort had appeared before, at least not in Latin American fiction.

Lost in critical accounts of Onetti in English—and this because publishers were so slow to commission English translations of his work—is the extent to which he was a major influence on a generation of writers who would come of age in the 1960s and '70s, the years of *El boom*. To hear Vargas Llosa's account, *The Pit* as well as *A Brief Life* helped unshackle the Latin American novel from the regionalist fiction of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which tended to be provincial, plot-driven and often overtly nationalistic. By contrast, here was fiction whose drama sprang entirely from the heads of its characters. In *The Pit* Linacero says, a "stupid idea became an obsession," and the remark applies to much of Onetti's work, which invariably begins with a single idea—a doubt, a frustration, a tic—blossoming into a steady fixation. In *A Brief Life* Juan María Brausen dreams up multiple counterlives before finally constructing, and populating, the imaginary city of Santa María. "I was destined to support Arce," he says, speaking about one of his half-real creations, "in the same way that, after death, my decomposition would feed a plant." Larsen, a character in Brausen's imagined city and a ubiquitous figure in Onetti's subsequent novels, imagines creating the perfect brothel. In the eponymous novel of 1964, he goes by the name Body Snatcher, a pimp who collects prostitutes and peddles them as corpses. As material reality crumbles away, Larsen—like Linacero, Brausen and, ultimately, Onetti—nourishes his obsession.

When not treated with utter disinterest or disregard, Onetti's literary output was—and still is, you might say—beset by critical misunderstandings. The latest example comes from the admiring Vargas Llosa, whose as yet untranslated book on Onetti, *El viaje a la ficción*, appeared in 2008. Even though Onetti liberated Latin American fiction from parochial literary traditions, Vargas Llosa argues, he nevertheless represents a Latin America of "failure and underdevelopment," a world whose exigencies breed an author almost congenitally inclined to stage fantasies and flights from reality. Vargas Llosa casts Onetti's work as the inevitable product of a universal Latin American experience that forces its literary denizens into the counterfactual and heady realm of fiction. Such an appraisal, though, doesn't

clarify the Uruguayan's work. In one sense, Vargas Llosa is clearly trying to affix Onetti to the Latin American literary firmament, where there is already a richly ennobling tradition of masterly fantasizing and defiance of realism. And yet, in another way, Vargas Llosa propounds an ill-fitting essentialism, something that obscures rather than illuminates the particularities of Onetti's visions, which have at least as much in common with Sartre and Camus as with his towering Latin American counterparts.

Critics often find in the relentless obsessions and fantasies of Linacero, Brausen and Larsen signs of some political eventuality. This is uncertain at best. Onetti was as close to being an apolitical figure as there may have been in the decades when he wrote. With the exception of an early novel, politics was a topic he pointedly refused to take up in his fiction. And when he did, as in *Tonight* (1942), inspired by the Spanish Civil War, it was with his usual elusiveness. The novel's epigraph suggests a solipsism at odds with devotion to political causes:

> All over the world in 1942 people were defending with their bodies various of the author's convictions when this novel was being written. The idea that only those people were living a life true to destiny was humiliating and difficult to accept. This book was written from the need—satisfied in a petty, non-compromising way—to participate in the pain, anguish, and heroism of others. It is, then, a cynical attempt at liberation.

There would be occasional intimations of political-mindedness, but his fiction, for its part, leaves few clues as to its author's political inclinations.

Uruguay had grown increasingly unstable by the late 1960s, and politics managed to vandalize the life of even the aloof and politically inactive Onetti. By the end of the decade, Uruguay's ailing economy had the second-lowest growth rate in the hemisphere (Haiti's was the lowest), and its social safety net had unraveled. Elements of the left, grown increasingly radicalized, were in turn marginalized and excluded from the government, where a burgeoning conservative culture had taken root. By 1967, when the arch-conservative Jorge Pacheco assumed the presidency, violent clashes had broken out between the government and the militant guerrilla organization Tupamaros; Pacheco declared a state of emergency under the Constitution, shutting down leftist newspapers and criminalizing membership in anarchist and leftist groups as well as the state Socialist Party. His successor, Juan María Bordaberry—the beneficiary of a 1971 election rife with fraud—proved even more repressive, and was strong-armed after a military coup by a cadre of generals intent on a nationwide crackdown of an altogether unprecedented reach. At the military's order, Bordaberry dissolved Parliament, outlawed dissent and unleashed the police on suspected leftist sympathizers. In this environment, the most happenstance and inconsequential associations were routinely grounds for detention and torture by the police. The National Security Council, as the generals in Bordaberry's circle called themselves, was particularly sensitive to criticisms of the state security forces.

In 1974 Onetti was imprisoned after a fruitless interrogation for having sat on a jury that awarded a prize to a short story depicting a local police chief as a sadist and torturer. (The story ran in *Marcha*, which the government subsequently closed by decree for more than two months.) According to one account of the police roundup—which included not just Onetti but Carlos Quijano, film critic Hugo Alfaro, poet Mercedes Rein and the story's author, Nelson Marra—Onetti's interrogators grilled him on his political sympathies until he finally conceded, in a sarcastic capitulation, that he was perhaps an anarchist, the only charge that could be levied against a writer who lacked obviously incriminating political convictions.

By locking up a writer like Onetti, the Bordaberry regime succeeded in offering the perfect portrait of political incoherence. Onetti's imprisonment became a cause célèbre. Writers from all over Latin America as well as translators and critics in the United States and Europe all called for his release, which came three months later. In the aftermath of the ordeal, before he moved permanently to Madrid in 1975, Onetti received invitations to speak at international conferences; he won awards, and studies of his work began to appear in journals. Despite the welcome recognition, the tumult of his imprisonment and relocation left Onetti in a dry spell of sorts. The ordeal was hard on the writer. He had always suffered from depression, and was so roiled by his captivity that he threatened suicide and eventually had to be transferred to a psychiatric hospital. With the exception of a couple of stories—among them, the chilling "Presencia" (published in 1978 and still untranslated), about the region's *desaparecidos*—Onetti had particular trouble writing, and did not publish another novel until 1979, when *Let the Wind Speak* came out.

His output by then had grown uneven anyway. Between 1964 and 1974 he published only the odd story. He was quiet during the Boom years when younger writers like García Márquez and Vargas Llosa (with the aid of the ingenious Spanish publisher Carlos Barral and agent Carmen Balcells) produced wildly successful novels that sold hundreds of thousands of copies and catapulted a generation into the global literary spotlight. The Boom was due at least as much to marketing and advocacy by and for the writers themselves as to the quality of their books. Onetti, by contrast, kept almost entirely to himself during the years before his imprisonment. He offered occasional interviews and wrote at his own pace; he was uninterested in giving prominent seminars, engaging in self-advocacy or signing on to political causes. He was a pessimist, largely apolitical, existentially ill at ease, a cosmopolitan but of the unlikeliest elements (the bordellos and stories of dissipation and urban cruelty inherited from Faulkner, Céline and the Argentine novelist Roberto Arlt). No one else sounded like Onetti at the time, and then, before long, English readers were beguiled by the virtuosity of García Márquez and Vargas Llosa, the worldliness of Cortázar. Onetti's decision to relocate to Madrid, not Barcelona, the hub of the Boom years, confirms his essential remove.

Onetti's move to Madrid, not Barcelona, hub of the Boom, confirms his essential remove.

Is Onetti's singularity his curse? All his fiction tends toward fantasy but avoids magical realism. Instead there is an agonizing and almost methodical justification of the turn to the unreal, forged out of the smoldering remains of human failures, dashed expectations, missed opportunities, decay and the onset of senility. As such, his fiction resists ready classification, which has frustrated even enthusiastic critics.

In 1968, when Onetti's seventh novel, *The Shipyard* (1961), was translated into English

KING
A Filmed Record
Montgomery to Memphis

"Perhaps the most important film documentary ever made"
The Philadelphia Bulletin

The original 3-hour film is now available for the first time in almost 40 years. Order the special 2-disc commemorative DVD from

www.afilmedrecord.com

Cat Lovers Against the Bomb
Wall Calendar 2010

Order from: CLAB Nation, P.O. Box 83466
Lincoln, NE 68501-3466 $8.95 +$1.75
Toll free: 877-778-3434 postage

WWW.THENATIONMART.COM
Nation Mart

by Rachel Caffyn, the British critic David Gallagher extolled the novel in a review for the *New York Times* as "a graphic, ominous symbol of Uruguayan decay." Onetti was disappointed by the review, complaining that he had written a novel not of airy symbolism but instead about the failures of a particular man. The protagonist of the novel is Larsen, returned to Santa María many years after the foundering of his perfect brothel. He is the melancholic manager of a decaying shipyard starved for ships and cargo. Gallagher's interpretation is impressively charitable considering how little he had to go on. The book that preceded *The Shipyard* in the Santa María cycle, *A Brief Life*, was published in 1950 but not translated into English until 1976. (Serpent's Tail has just rereleased the original translation by Hortense Carpentier.) Gallagher reviewed *The Shipyard* presumably without reading, or even appearing to know about, the cycle's inaugural title. Nor is it likely he read the third novel in the cycle, the then-untranslated *Body Snatcher*, from 1964.

Taken together, the novels and stories set in Santa María reveal an astonishing coherence. The city and its personages become Onetti's sustaining literary subject; characters are forever reappearing, alluding to prior events and past conversations, partaking of small-town gossip. In *A Grave With No Name* (1959), for instance, there is talk of an event that had occurred in the then-distant past but that is narrated in a novel released two years later. The final pages of *A Brief Life* and *Body Snatcher* describe a conversation that coincides nearly word for word, even though the characters are fully named in the 1964 novel and only partially identified in the novel from 1950. In his stories, the most microscopic details about any of Onetti's great Santa María figures—the police chief Medina, the journalist Jorge Malabia and doctor Díaz Grey—are consistent and carefully interwoven over the span of decades of writing.

These sometimes esoteric intricacies have made translating Onetti a particularly fraught endeavor. He has been mishandled in English—and not by any one translator necessarily (although that's been a problem too) but by the order in which the translations have been published. *The Shipyard* was first to appear and was probably picked because of Onetti's growing reputation in the late 1960s. Though originally written earlier, *A Brief Life* appeared in English eight years later. Then, nothing until the 1990s. This order—utterly random and scattered—is one of the great injustices done to Onetti in English. (And, one might add, to the books of his more successful peers. Bolaño's first novel, *The Skating Rink*, from 1993, was translated into English only in 2009, one year after the publication in English of *2666*, the novel Bolaño left uncompleted when he died in 2003.) The jumbled sequence of Onetti translations has obscured continuities among books and made an already hermetic writer even harder to grasp.

There is also the more obviously confounding question of what to make of Onetti in the original Spanish. His sentences unfold without regard for chronology or space and are thickly layered; their heaped-up details forever recede back into themselves. In the arresting novella *Farewells* (1954), the narrator's description of the gaze of a sanatorium patient also doubles as a lucid description of Onetti's sentences: "In a gentle, tried and tested manner working hard both to convince and corrupt what he was looking at, so that everything was touched by the sense of slight desperation."

Despite their obvious stylistic differences, Onetti shares with Borges a penchant for creating elaborate alternate realities—and for showing how these realities have come to pass. Onetti's admirers like to call him "Borgesian," which the Argentine, who never particularly liked Onetti, would at least have appreciated. In "Kafka and his Precursors," Borges says that the writer creates his own precursors and thus defies chronology. Such appears to be the partial fate of Juan Carlos Onetti, only in reverse—a buried influence, an unsuspecting casualty of literary history.

In June of last year, a previously unpublished short story by Onetti surfaced in Montevideo and promptly appeared in *Turia*, a Spanish literary magazine. "El último viernes" is spare, only several pages long, and consists in its entirety of a conversation between a police chief and a journalist. They share coarse reminiscences and coarser projections. Onetti had written the story on the already filled pages of his daughter's childhood notebook. It's a telling image—Onetti writing over his daughter's words only, finally, to be written over himself. Time and circumstance, and the particular bend of prevailing literary history, have all but buried Onetti's fiction in English. And if left unaccounted for, his work—to his readers in translation anyway—is perhaps in danger of being worn away. Onetti himself once admitted that his reign was not of this world; at the time, he hadn't intended that to be a warning. ■

Classified

While we reserve the right to edit, reject or reclassify any advertisement, The Nation *wishes its readers to know we don't have the facilities to check the promises made by our advertisers, and we have a strong presumption against censoring any advertisement, especially if we disagree with its politics. To advertise, contact amanda@thenation.com or call (212) 209-5414. Mail inquiries to* The Nation *Classified Department, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.*

ANCIENT SECRETS

SCHOLARLY BOOKLET PROVES PISO (*a k a* Josephus) invented fictional Jesus, Gospels. Amazing but incontrovertible. $15: Abelard, Box 5652 A, Kent, WA 98064.

BLOGS/WEB

RESIST THE PRESENT. Blog the future. revolutionsolution.com.

FACT THAT U.S. SKY IS FALLING is being ignored by *The Nation* magazine. alqasas.net.

COMMUNITIES

LAND AVAILABLE, PRIVATE AND COMMON. New, sustainable, living/learning community. SE Ohio, near university. permaculturesynergies.com.

LIBERAL LIAISONS

If responding to a Nation Box number, send replies to: Nation Box ___ , The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003.

FROM SEDUCTION TO FREAKY. The only limit is your imagination. No hidden fees. CC only. (888) 666-2059. fetishphonegirls.com.

FETISHES AND FANTASIES fulfilled. Hot erotic talk with creative, sensuous woman. No limits. Personal, confidential. Call (866) 844-8286.

MATURE, INTELLIGENT CONVERSATION. Erotic, imaginative, independently operated. missaria.com. (866) 454-3763.

AURAL EROTICA. Well heeled, well spoken, not always well behaved. Fetish friendly, smart & sexy. (800) 717-LIZZ (5499); ElizabethPaxton.com.

GREEN SINGLES. Free photo ads for progressive singles in the environmental, vegetarian and animal rights communities. Searchable listings for friendship, dating, marriage. Since 1985. greensingles.com.

WHAT'S YOUR DREAM? Single male, 54, 5'9", athletic, sailing, silent sports, yoga, organic farm, cats, eclectic, political consultant, left, social/farm/food activist, sustainable lifestyle, passionate, romantic, intellectual. ISO fit woman (mid-40s to early 50s), mutually affirming relationship, Wisconsin: farm.wi@gmail.com. Reply Nation Box 821.

MERCHANDISE

Talk Back Tees

Liberal quotations, wit & wisdom, hand-printed on colorful, 100% cotton tees
talkbacktees.com (800) 777-9242

EXPRESS YOURSELF! Stickers, shirts, buttons, emblems and more—evolvefish.com. (800) 386-5846 for catalog or to order now.

MERCHANDISE

SUPPORT *THE NATION* AND OUR NATION! Shop online at thenationmart.com and exercise subtle and not-so-subtle dissent. Most items are union-made. Great gifts!

INTELLIGENT DESIGN! Viking Age artifacts in replica from Scandinavian museums: jewelry, glassware, Norwegian pewter, figurines, tapestries. vikingtrader.net.

CAT LOVERS AGAINST THE BOMB: 2010 wall calendar. $8.95 + $1.75 postage. Cats & Peace: what more could you want in a calendar? Order from: CLAB-NC, PO Box 83466, Lincoln, NE 68501, or toll-free (877) 778-3434, or catcal@aol.com.

NEW YORK CITY

RADICAL HISTORY TOUR of Greenwich Village and Lower East Side. Sponsored by Socialist Party of NYC, Sundays 1 PM. Call (646) 678-5217.

ORGANIZATIONS

NEW *NATION* ASSOCIATES DISCUSSION GROUP forming in Southwest Kansas (Hugoton). Contact: Jack Golding (620) 428-5647 or golding6231@yahoo.com.

ST. LOUIS *NATION* DISCUSSION GROUP invites you to join us every fourth Sunday of the month. For information, e-mail lydialewis@att.net.

LANSING, MICH., *Nation* discussion group is looking for new members. We also would like to link up with any progressive discussion groups meeting in Michigan and assist anyone throughout the state seeking to establish a *Nation* discussion group. Contact: richardc@michcom.net or (517) 627-4591.

BOSTON HUMANIST COMMUNITY. Free Sunday lectures. Ethical culture. Harvard Square. Social activity groups. bostonethical.org, (617) 739-9050.

SAN FRANCISCO *Nation* discussion group. For information, e-mail evilhess@gmail.com.

NASHVILLE, TENN., *Nation* discussion group. Contact Howard Romaine. hromaine@gmail.com.

BERKELEY, CALIF., *Nation* discussion group. E-mail prehend@gmail.com.

SAN JOSE, CALIF., discussion group meets the fourth Sunday of the month, 1 to 3 PM, downtown. Contact Lois at loisaalbq@yahoo.com for more info.

ASHEVILLE, NC, *Nation* discussion group forming. Contact mgibney@unca.edu.

SPOKANE/INLAND NORTHWEST *Nation* discussion group: PO Box 293, Cheney, WA 99004; locus29@aol.com.

SAN ANTONIO *Nation* discussion group. Second Mondays, Grady's Bar-B-Q at San Pedro and Jackson Keller. Contact lenwheeler@satx.rr.com for more information.

RICHMOND, VA, *Nation* discussion group is seeking new members. Contact Wayne Young, (804) 232-8521, youngwayne88838@aol.com.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

CHICAGO PSYCHOTHERAPIST, twenty-five years, all issues, including depression, anxiety, relationships, creative blocks. Sliding scale, insurance. Deborah Hellerstein, PhD, (312) 409-9516. therapyinchicago.com.

PSYCHOTHERAPY

SAN FRANCISCO PSYCHOTHERAPIST. Anxiety, depression, relationship issues. Near USF. Sliding scale. (415) 289-6990. paulabranchholt.com. Paula Holt, LCSW.

REAL ESTATE

MOVING TO FAIRFIELD COUNTY, CONNECTICUT? Realtor seeks clients of same persuasion as a *Nation* subscriber. Contact (203) 259-2519 or madgecanning.com.

LEFT COAST, US. Work with The Realtor Who's on Your Side. Norma J.F. Harrison. (510) 526-3968. (866) 264-9029. NormaHa@pacbell.net.

GREATER SACRAMENTO–AREA REALTOR seeks progressive clients. Margo McBride, Remax Professionals. (916) 721-8334. margomcbride@comcast.net. margomcbride.com.

SANTA FE: PROGRESSIVE REALTOR® seeks same in clients. Peter Kahn, Santa Fe Realty Partners. (505) 690-4840 cell, (877) 982-6207 toll free, or peter@peterkahn.com.

TRAVEL

MATT BARRETT'S GREECE TRAVEL GUIDE: Informative, entertaining, essential and free. greecetravel.com.

ATTENTION CHAUTAUQUANS: Summer vacation! Three-, four- and seven-day visits. Day passes, two-room suites, breakfast/parking and shuttle. Chautauqua Suites and Expo Center. Call (716) 269-7829 or visit chautauquasuites.com.

Events

BOSTON

Celebrating Resistance to McCarthyism

■ Fiftieth anniversary of Willard Uphaus's release from jail for resisting McCarthyism. Featured speaker: Robert Meeropol, Rosenberg Fund for Children. May 1, 7 PM., First Church JP, Boston. Preview secular summer fun with speakers, music and refreshments. Learn, love nature and share radical progressive values. Experience NH World Fellowship. Info: worldfellowship.org, (603) 447-2280.

CHICAGO

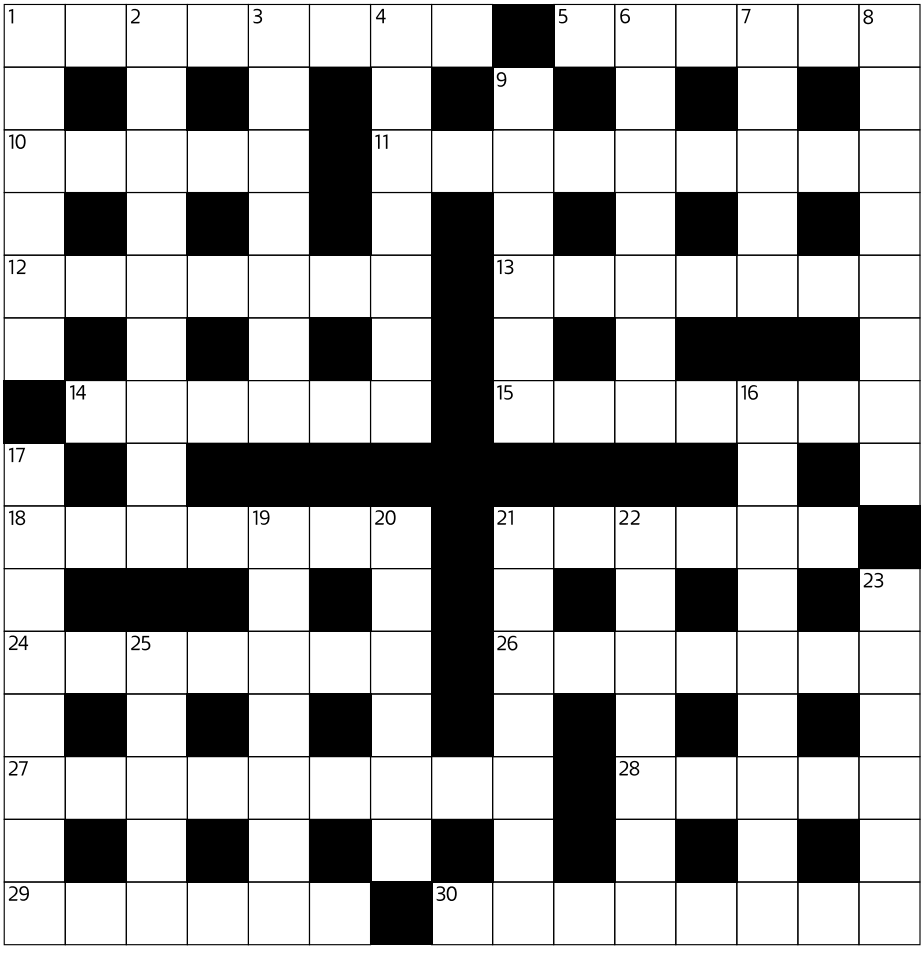
A Century of May Days

■ April 30–May 2. DePaul University. International conference. People from Berlin, Tokyo, Copenhagen, Iran, Glasgow, Paris, Venezuela, London, Toronto, Vienna, Stuttgart, Brazil, Pakistan, Sweden… Young activists. A Japanese A-bomb survivor and a German antifascist who outlived Hitler. Take part in the May Day rally, organized by the Chicago Federation of Labor and the Illinois Labor History Society. Also, a labor history bus tour. mayday2010.info.

The advertising deadline for Events is every Thursday. Rates: $210 for 50 words; $260 for 75 words, additional words (above 75) $2.00 each. To place an ad, call Amanda at (212) 209-5414.

Puzzle No. 260

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Mathematicians tables. (8)

5 All wrapped up in the *Post*. (6)

10 One needs a glass to do it. (5)

11 Hammett's Charles was. (9)

12 At this, one might strike a note to cheer one up. (7)

13 Does a rooster part with this? (7)

14 Where a dome was decreed. (6)

15 This is also finished in Mass. (7)

18 Sideways, as a neck. (7)

21 Makes a friend attempt something picayunish. (6)

24 Standard operating procedure when taken with an emulsion. (7)

26 Where one returns to, after a cigarette. (7)

27 The sort is sorted here. (9)

28 Usually not 16. (5)

29 Continue a recapitulation. (6)

30 Why should the seed cost be petted this way? (8)

DOWN

1 A small company to measure coin. (6)

2 Johnny Reb's counterpart? (5,4)

3 Swell stuff for a pudding. (7)

4 Our dean has a number of lines. (7)

6 Texas was, in 1845. (7)

7 Relief came to nothing here. (5)

8 Hen? (8)

9 A hundred, a hundred and one, a tree. (6)

16 Extremely blond, and fired at 28? (4,5)

17 Bill made with the feet from here each month. (3,5)

19 It's patent that this goes with a mare. (7)

20 So pale in the South. (2,4)

21 He did more than play with blocks, somewhat abstractly. (7)

22 Filaments, if removed. (7)

23 Was Texas also this in 1845? (6)

25 Loses a deposit. (5)

This puzzle originally appeared in the May 1, 1948, issue.

AVAILABLE
from Nation Books!

A collection of Frank W. Lewis classics!!

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2239

The Nation (ISSN 0027-8378) is published weekly (except for the second week in January, and biweekly the third week of July through the second week of September) by The Nation Company, L.P. © 2010 in the U.S.A. by The Nation Company, L.P., 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. (212) 209-5400. Washington Bureau: Suite 308, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, DC 20002. (202) 546-2239. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Subscription orders, changes of address and all subscription inquiries: The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149, or call 1-800-333-8536. Publications Mail Agreement No: 40041477. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to Bleuchip International, PO Box 25542, London, ON N6C 6B2. Canada Post: Publications Mail Agreement No.: 40612608. When ordering a subscription, please allow 4-6 weeks for receipt of your first issue and for all subscription transactions. Basic annual subscription price: $79 for 47 issues. Back issues $6 prepaid ($8 foreign) from: The Nation, 33 Irving Place, New York, NY 10003. The Nation is available on microfilm from: University Microfilms, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Nation, PO Box 55149, Boulder, CO 80322-5149. Printed in U.S.A. on recycled paper.

The Basics of Math—Made Clear

Gain Mathematical Confidence in 30 Lessons

Basic Math introduces students to the basic concepts of mathematics, as well as the fundamentals of more complicated areas. These 30 engaging lectures are designed to provide students with an understanding of arithmetic and to prepare them for Algebra I and beyond.

Professor Murray H. Siegel, honored by Kentucky Educational Television as "the best math teacher in America," has a Ph.D. in Mathematics Education. He has a gift and a passion for explaining mathematical concepts in ways that make math seem clear and obvious rather than arbitrary and murky. From the basics of multiplication to decimals and fractions, he is the master of the skillful metaphor and the well-wrought example.

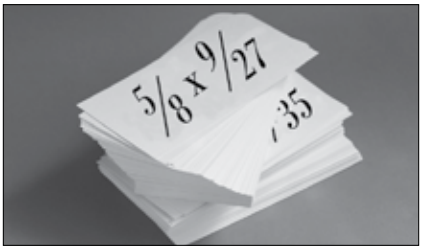
The lessons in **Basic Math** cover the arithmetic of whole numbers, fractions, decimals, percents, and integers. They also investigate exponents, the order of operations, and square roots. In addition to learning how to perform various mathematical operations, students discover why these operations work, how a particular mathematical topic relates to other branches of mathematics, and how these operations can be used practically.

Basic Math is arranged sequentially to allow for a logical development of the material. The lectures offer students the chance to "make sense" of mathematical knowledge that may have been a source of frustration. They also help students prepare for college mathematics and overcome their anxiety about this insightful—and completely understandable—field of study.

By the conclusion of the course, students will have improved their understanding of basic math. They will be able to clear away the mystery of mathematics and face their studies with more confidence than they ever imagined. Furthermore, they will strengthen their ability to accept new and exciting mathematical challenges.

About Your Professor

Dr. Murray H. Siegel teaches Mathematics at Central Arizona College. His courses include various remedial classes and a two-course sequence for future elementary school teachers, the subject matter of which can be found in **Basic Math**. Professor Siegel received his M.Ed., Ed.S., and Ph.D. from Georgia State University.



© Cone 6 Productions/Brand X/Corbis.

Nationally recognized as a mathematics educator, Professor Siegel's community and college workshops, courses, and videos help audiences overcome mathematical anxiety and provide them with a picture of mathematics as a logical subject with great utility.

About The Teaching Company®

We review hundreds of top-rated professors from America's best colleges and universities each year. From this extraordinary group we choose only those rated highest by panels of our customers. Fewer than 10% of these world-class scholar-teachers are selected to make The Great Courses®.

We've been doing this since 1990, producing more than 3,000 hours of material in modern and ancient history, philosophy, literature, fine arts, the sciences, and mathematics for intelligent, engaged, adult lifelong learners. If a course is ever less than completely satisfying, you may exchange it for another or we will refund your money promptly.

About Our Sale Price Policy

Why is the sale price for this course so much lower than its standard price? Every course we make goes on sale at least once a year. Producing large quantities of only the sale courses keeps costs down and allows us to pass the savings on to you. This approach also enables us to fill your order immediately: 99% of all orders placed by 2 pm eastern time ship that same day. Order before May 22, 2010, to receive these savings.

Lecture Titles

1. Introduction and a Review of Addition and Subtraction
2. Multiplication and Division
3. Long Division
4. Introduction to Fractions
5. Adding Fractions
6. Subtracting Fractions
7. Multiplying Fractions
8. Dividing Fractions, Plus a Review of Fractions
9. Adding and Subtracting Decimals
10. Multiplying and Dividing Decimals
11. Using the Calculator
12. Fractions, Decimals, and Percents
13. Percent Problems
14. Ratios and Proportions
15. Exponents and the Order of Operations
16. Adding and Subtracting Integers
17. Multiplication and Division of Integers, and an Introduction to Square Roots
18. Negative and Fractional Powers
19. Geometry I
20. Geometry II
21. Graphing in the Coordinate Plane
22. Number Theory
23. Number Patterns I
24. Number Patterns II
25. Statistics
26. Probability
27. Measurement
28. Problem-Solving Techniques
29. Solving Simple Equations
30. Introduction to Algebra I

THE TEACHING COMPANY®
The Joy of Lifelong Learning Every Day™
GREAT PROFESSORS, GREAT COURSES, GREAT VALUE GUARANTEED.™

SAVE $175!
OFFER GOOD UNTIL MAY 22, 2010

1-800-TEACH-12 (1-800-832-2412)
Fax: 703-378-3819

Special offer is available online at
www.TEACH12.com/6ntn

The Great Courses
THE TEACHING COMPANY
4151 Lafayette Center Drive, Suite 100
Chantilly, VA 20151-1232

Priority Code 39329

Please send me **Basic Math**, which consists of thirty 30-minute lessons complete with workbook.

☐ **DVD $79.95** (std. $254.95) **SAVE $175!**
plus $15 shipping, processing, and Lifetime Satisfaction Guarantee

☐ **Check or Money Order Enclosed**

* Non-U.S. Orders: Additional shipping charges apply.
For more details, call us or visit the FAQ page on our website.

** Virginia residents please add 5% sales tax.

Charge my credit card:

☐ VISA ☐ ☐ ☐

ACCOUNT NUMBER EXP. DATE

SIGNATURE

NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

MAILING ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

PHONE *(If we have questions regarding your order—required for international orders)*

☐ **FREE CATALOG.** Please send me a free copy of your current catalog (no purchase necessary).

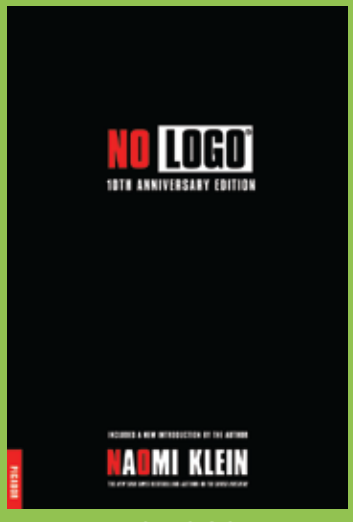
Special offer is available online at www.TEACH12.com/6ntn
Offer Good Through: May 22, 2010

PICADOR PAPERBACKS

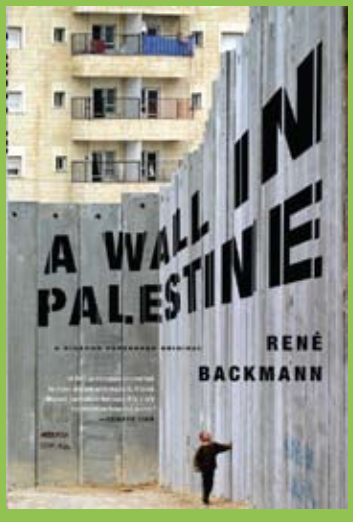
NAOMI KLEIN • GREG GRANDIN
RENÉ BACKMANN • RAJ PATEL

10TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL EDITION WITH A NEW INTRODUCTION

"A movement bible."
—The New York Times



NO LOGO
NAOMI KLEIN

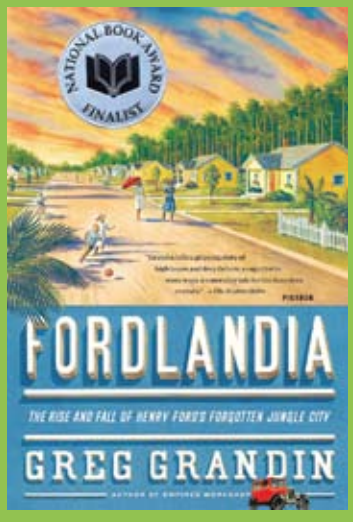


TRADE PAPERBACK ORIGINAL
A WALL IN PALESTINE
RENÉ BACKMANN

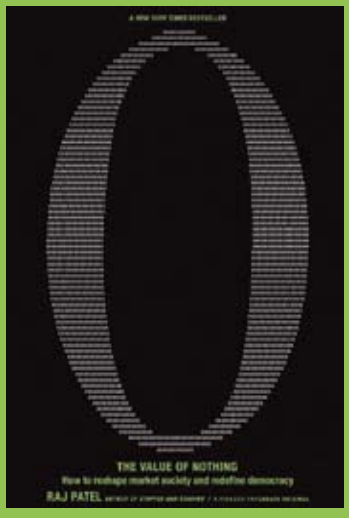
"[*A Wall in Palestine*] cannot fail to move anyone who reads it. It goes beyond journalism because it is a cry for attention from the world."
—Howard Zinn

NATIONAL BOOK AWARD FINALIST

"Grandin tells a gripping story of high hopes and deep failure, a saga that in some ways is a morality tale for the American century."
—The Boston Globe



FORDLANDIA
GREG GRANDIN



TRADE PAPERBACK ORIGINAL
THE VALUE OF NOTHING
RAJ PATEL

***NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLER**

"A deeply thought-provoking book about the dramatic changes we must make to save the planet from financial madness…brilliant."
—Naomi Klein

PICADOR / www.picadorusa.com